THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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PAKISTAN WORST HIT BY TERROR, INDIA SEES FALL IN ATTACKS: REPORT

Pakistan recorded more than 1,000 terrorism incidents in 2025, which has pushed it to the top place in the latest Global Terrorism Index ranking

PAK ACCOUNTS FOR 1 IN 5 TERROR DEATHS

Pakistan has seen a sharp resurgence in terrorist activity by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other groups since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan. Deaths from terrorism in Pakistan were at their highest since 2013 with the country recording 1,139 terrorism-related deaths in 2025. That accounts for one in five terror related deaths around the world last year

INDIA SEES 43% DECLINE IN ATTACKS

- India ranked 13th, moving up one place from the previous year's ranking. However, the number of terrorist attacks fell by 43%. India accounted for 2% of terrorism-related deaths in 2025 | P7
- Four outfits—Islamic State, Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen, TTP, and al-Shabaab—were responsible for 70% of terrorism deaths

5,582

PEOPLE KILLED IN 2,944 TERRORIST ATTACKS GLOBALLY IN 2025

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Emergency CCS meet reviews West Asia crisis

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to take stock of the domestic situation due to the evolving West Asia conflict and chalk out the strategy to mitigate the war's impact on India.

The CCS meeting, chaired by the PM and attended by key ministers, assessed the availability of critical needs of common people, including food, energy, and fuel security.

The CCS is the highest decision-making body on security and strategic matters. Its members include Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

According to statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) after the CCS meeting, discussions were held on the expected impact on critical sectors such as agriculture, fertilisers, petroleum, power, MSMEs, shipping, and finance.

The PM directed that a group of ministers and secretaries be created to work dedicatedly in a whole-of-government approach to deal with the effects of the conflict. The prime minister also suggested that sectoral groups be set up and they work in consultation with all stakeholders.

The PMO statement further said that the war between US-Israel and Iran will have a big impact on the global economy. "The ongoing conflict in West Asia will have significant short, medium and long-term impact on the global economy and its effect on India were assessed and counter-measures, both immediate and long-term, were discussed," it added.

47K TONNE OF LPG FROM U.S. REACHES M'LURU

Mangaluru: Providing major relief to oil marketing companies and households amid supply disruptions due to the West Asia crisis, a vessel carrying 46,961 tonne of LPG arrived at the New Mangalore Port from the Port of Nederland in Texas, U.S., on Sunday morning. The vessel, Pyxis Pioneer, was sailing under Singapore flag | P5

The meeting discussed measures to ensure continued availability of essential needs and assesssed the conflict's indirect impact on farmers and their requirement for fertilizer for the Kharif season.

The PM described the conflict as an evolving situation in which the entire world is affected in some form or the other. "In such a situation, all efforts must be made to safeguard the citizens from the impact of this conflict," the prime minister asserted.

The prime minister instructed that all arms of governments should work together during the crisis period to ensure least inconvenience to the citizens. He also asked for close coordination with state government to ensure there is no black-marketing or hoarding of important commodities.

'INDIA INC FACES RAW MATERIAL SHORTAGE'

New Delhi: Indian companies are facing disruptions ranging from shipment delays to shortages of key raw materials due to the ongoing West Asia conflict, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said on Sunday. In a statement, CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said the conflict has disrupted key maritime routes and supply chains. "Indian companies are experiencing downstream effects, from shipment delays to constraints in key energy inputs, as well as emerging shortages in essential raw materials across several sectors that rely heavily on timely cross-border flows," he said

The US would hit and obliterate Iranian power plants starting with the biggest one first if Tehran did not fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours, or 23:44 GMT on Monday – US President Donald Trump

TRUMP GIVES IRAN 48 HOURS

Tehran responds by threatening to blow up all US infrastructure in the Gulf

AGENCIES @ Tel Aviv / Tehran

IRAN on Sunday threatened to "irreversibly destroy" key infrastructure across West Asia and "completely close" the Strait of Hormuz, crucial to oil and other exports, if the US follows up on President Donald Trump's threat to attack its power plants unless the key waterway is reopened in 48 hours.

The tit-for-tat threats came as the war entered its fourth week and continued to reverberate across the Gulf, with global alarm mounting over strikes around nuclear sites.

DAY 23 WAR WATCH

Trump, under pressure over rising fuel prices, wrote on Truth Social that US would "hit and obliterate" Iranian power plants "starting with the biggest one first" if Tehran did not fully reopen the strait within 48 hours, or 23:44 GMT on Monday.

Iran said it would respond to any such attacks by targeting US energy, IT, and desalination infrastructure across the region. Iran's defiance came a day after its missiles evaded Israel's much-vaunted air defences and struck two southern towns, including Dimona which houses a nuclear facility, injuring dozens.

Iran said the strike on Dimona was in response to an attack on its nuclear site at Natanz.

The impact from the war continued to be felt across the region. Early Sunday morning, AFP reported that blasts and air raid sirens were heard in Jerusalem as Iran launched a fresh barrage of missiles at Israel. Israel launched a wave of strikes on the Iranian capital Tehran in response.

Iran also kept up retaliatory attacks on Gulf nations it accuses of serving as a launchpad for US strikes. Saudi Arabia said on Sunday that it detected three ballistic missiles around the capital Riyadh. One was intercepted and two fell in uninhabited areas, the defence ministry said. The UAE said it responded to new attacks from Iran.

Israeli rescue teams at a site struck by an Iranian missile in Arad, southern Israel, on Sunday | AP

WAR IN RISKY PHASE

WHO chief Tedros Ghebreyesus said the war is at a 'perilous stage' following strikes on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility and in the city of Dimona near an Israeli nuclear research centre

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was noncommittal when asked about Trump's threats to strike Iran's power plants if the Strait of Hormuz isn't opened, and whether Israel would join. "President Trump knows exactly what he's doing. And whatever we do we do together and as far as possible in confidence."

LONGEST SERVING HEAD OF ELECTED GOVT

PM Narendra Modi has completed 8,931 days in public life, surpassing ex-Sikkim CM Pawan Kumar Chamling's record | P7

Air ticket fares likely to surge from today

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

BRACE for higher airfares from Monday as the temporary price cap imposed by the government in December, in the wake of the IndiGo crisis, is set to expire.

This comes at a time when airlines have seen a rise in operational expenses on account of the circuitous routes taken by international flights due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia between US-Israel and Iran. Airlines had recently introduced a fuel surcharge to offset the higher operational expenses due to the rise in price of Aviation Turbine Fuel.

Referring to the IndiGo crisis in December, the order said, "The prevailing situation has since stabilised, with restoration of capacity and normalisation of operations across the sector."

While removing the fare cap, the government has directed airlines to exercise pricing discipline and warned that "excessive or unjustified surge in fares during periods of peak demand or disruptions" could force the government to reintroduce fare caps or make other interventions in the public interest.

EXPRESS INTAKE

Commercial LPG crisis costs B'luru hotels ₹150 cr | P2

Case against tahsildar office staff in land forgery case | P4

Placed in 'digital arrest', 81-yr-old loses ₹15.45 cr

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Belagavi

IN one of the biggest cyber fraud cases in the state so far, an 81-year-old businessman in Belagavi has been cheated of Rs 15.45 crore by cyber criminals by placing him under 'digital arrest'.

The police said the victim, a resident of Agarkar Road in Tilakwadi, received a WhatsApp call on February 5 from individuals posing as officials from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). They told the businessman that SIM cards registered in his name were linked to illegal activities, and one of them had been used to contact a senior executive of Jet Airways. They also told him that the official has already been arrested.

The cyber criminals then told the businessman that he was under investigation in a money-laundering case involving Rs 25 lakh and that he had received a commission of Rs 5 lakh. They again contacted him between February 7 and March 9, and coerced him into transferring money multiple times, ultimately siphoning off Rs 15.45 crore.

A complaint was filed with the cybercrime police on March 18. P5

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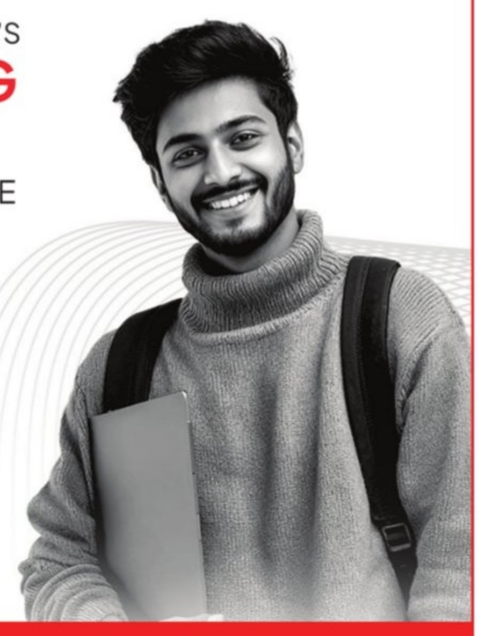

PROGRAMMES OFFERED IN

CSE | CSE (AI & ML) | CSE (AI & DS) | CS & IT | ISE | CSE (IoT & Cybersecurity-Blockchain) | Robotics & AI | Civil | Agricultural Engineering | Mechanical | Mechatronics | Aerospace | ECE | ECM | EEE | Design Engineering | Architecture

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LIC/P1/2024-25/51/Eng

ALMANAC TODAY
- **Monday:** 23.03.2026 • **Year:** Parabhava • **Ayana:** Uttharayana
- **Ritu:** Vasantha • **Masa:** Chaitra • **Paksha:** Sukla • **Tithi:** Panchami 6.39 pm
- **Nakshatra:** Krithika 8.50 pm • Moon in Mithuna Rashi • **Rahukaala:** 07:30 am to 09:00 am
- **Gulikakala:** 01:30 pm to 03:00 pm • **Yamaganda:** 10:30 am to 12:00 pm

WEATHER — MIN 20°C | MAX 32°C — **FORECAST** Afternoon clouds

Sunrise 06.22 am | Sunset 06.30 pm | Moonrise 09.28 am | Moonset 10.50 pm

GBA throws tax net wide, digitises 25L properties

Civic authority looks at additional revenue of Rs 600–700 crore

AKNISREE KARTHIK
@ Bengaluru

IN over two years, 25,14,375 properties across the city have been digitised. The drive began at the end of 2023 after Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar directed civic authorities to digitise properties in Bengaluru to boost the city's revenue, by bringing properties into the tax net.

Of the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), Bengaluru West City Corporation (BECC) tops the list with 6,92,715 properties, followed by Bengaluru North City Corporation with 5,29,368 properties that are digitised. While Bengaluru South City Corporation has digitised 4,93,790 properties, Bengaluru East City Corporation (BECC) has 4,62,105 properties. Bengaluru Central City Corporation has the fewest digitised properties at 3,36,397. The data was part of the reply given to MLC TN Javarayi Gowda in the ongoing session of the Karnataka Legislative Council.

The Fifth State Finance Commission, in its 2026–2030 report for the five city corporations under the GBA, which was tabled in the Assembly recently, pointed out that with rapid growth and economic prosperity, there is substantial capital gains on property and other assets, and that the gain was not adequately tapped by expanding coverage and tax rates.

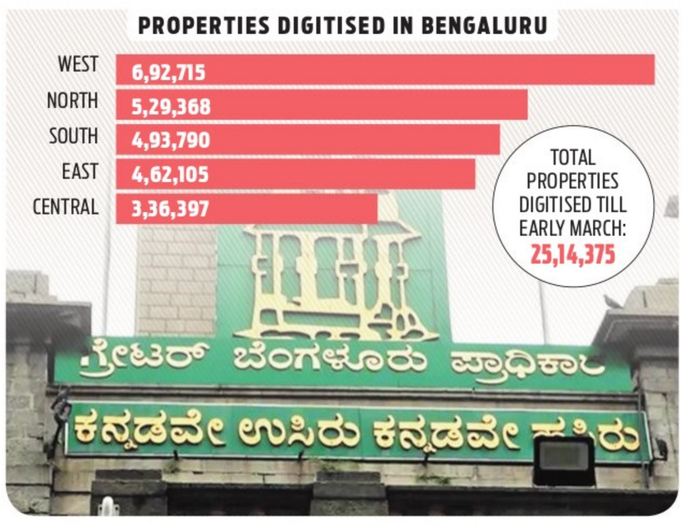
The Commission said GBA is collecting property tax from 20.46 lakh properties, and recommended that to increase revenue, nearly five lakh properties that remain unassessed be brought under the tax net. It said GBA can generate additional revenue of Rs 600-700 crore annually by doing so. It also batted for the use of advanced technologies such as drone imagery to detect changes in building structures, addition of new structures, and ensure complete coverage and more accurate property classification (based on location, usage and occupancy status).

Echoing the views of the Commission, civic activist and founder-member of Bengaluru Praja Vedike NS Mukunda said there would be more than 5lakh properties left to be digitised and brought under the tax net.

"Every other day, you find a new building cropping up or people adding floors to existing buildings. However, not all the new ones are brought under the tax net. There are wide gaps in self-assessed property tax, where owners under-declare their property to pay less tax. Officials are bribed in line with the violation," Mukunda said.

"City corporations can be self-reliant and need not beg from the state government, if they collect property taxes efficiently without any discrepancies or corruption," he said.

According to his estimate, property tax collection, which is around Rs 5,000 crore, can almost double annually if collected efficiently.



City corporations can be self-reliant and need not beg from the state government, if they collect property taxes efficiently without any discrepancies or corruption
— NS Mukunda, civic activist

GBA ELECTIONS

BJP appoints in-charges for each segment

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE BJP has geared up for the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections by appointing in-charge at the state level, at each corporation level and also for each Assembly segment.

The GBA state team has BJP state president BY Vijayendra, along with leaders of the Opposition in Assembly and Council, R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanswamy, Union ministers V Somanna and Shobha Karandlaje, former ministers S Suresh Kumar and Dr CN Ashwathnarayan and MPs PC Mohan, Dr CN Manjunath, Tejaswi Surya and Dr K Sudhakar and BJP State Secretary NS Nandish Reddy.

Bengaluru East Corporation has MLAs Byrathi Basavaraj, Manjula Aravind Limbavali, chief whip of Opposition in Council Ravikumar and Nandish Reddy, North Corporation has MLAs including SR Vishwanath and S Muniraju; West Corporation has LoP R Ashoka, MLAs S Suresh Kumar, CN Ashwatnarayan, Gopalaih, Muniratna and Ravi Sburamanya and South has MLAs Satish Reddy, M Krishnappa and CK Ramamurthy. The Central Corporation will have MLC CT Ravi, MLAs S Raghu and Uday Garudachar. For non-BJP constituencies, BJP leaders are made in-charges.

LPG crunch burns big hole, B'luru hotels lose ₹150 cr

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

BENGALURU'S hotel industry has reported losses of around Rs 150 crore over the past three weeks owing to a severe shortage of commercial LPG supply since the war began in West Asia, said PC Rao, honorary president of Bangalore Hotels Association (BHA), on Sunday.

"The shortage, which began around March 7–8, has disrupted operations across the sector with weekly losses estimated at nearly Rs 50 crore," he told *TNIE*. He said the crisis has forced hotels to scale down operations, trim menus and adopt alternatives such as induction stoves, diesel-based cooking systems and even firewood in some cases. Some hotels shut down operations temporarily. Popular eateries known for specific cuisines, including Chinese and biryani, were among the worst hit.

With the supply expected to partially resume from Monday, the eateries are preparing to restart full operations, Rao said. Officials indicated that around 50% of the usual LPG supply for hotels may be restored, although it is not yet clear whether the latest allocation is for Bengaluru alone or across Karnataka. The state is estimated to receive around 50,000 cylinders with Bengaluru accounting for the majority of consumption, Rao said.

Industry members are of the view that even a partial supply of one cylinder for every two cylinders previously allocated would help them manage operations temporarily. "We have to restart, otherwise we risk losing customers and facing heavy financial losses," Rao said.

Meanwhile, the matter is also being heard in the High Court, with arguments scheduled and authorities expected to submit details on LPG supply. Hoteliers expressed hope that the supplies will stabilise soon, enabling them to resume normal services.

A woman driver tests a new electric autorikshaw she received as part of Sthree Drives: Wheels of Change, a Women's Day celebration organised by B. PAC in Benglauru on Sunday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

Govt distributes free e-autos to 20 women, trans persons

BENGALURU: Twenty women and transgender persons were given free electric autorickshaws at a programme here on Sunday. Handing over the autos, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy announced government subsidies for women to purchase electric autos, and said priority will be given in providing them licences. The initiative was organised by the Bengaluru Political Action Committee (B.PAC) and CGI. Reddy said, "Such initiatives empower women to stand on their own feet and build confidence to lead independent lives." He announced that 10 more electric autos will be distributed free of cost through his foundation. He said that while female literacy and employment levels have improved, very few women were becoming auto drivers. Now, growing interest among women in this field is a positive sign, he said, also pointing to relatively low representation of women in politics. B.PAC CEO Revathy Ashok said their organisation is working to create meaningful livelihood opportunities through free training to drive autos. She said that over 400 women have been trained so far, while the target is to train 1,000 women by the year-end. CGI senior vice-president Sudhir Sharma said the initiative reflects a commitment to enabling sustainable careers. **ENS**

Namma Metro eyes partial launch of Pink Line in May

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Pink Line of Namma Metro is targeted for partial opening in May, covering 7.53 km of elevated corridor (Kalena Agrahara to Tavarekere). Trials, including technical evaluations by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO) are yet to begin.

RDSO testing for the stretch is expected shortly, a senior Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) official said.

He further added that the testing will include a range of technical assessments such as braking systems, signalling, speed test, weighted tests and other safety parameters. Also, it will focus on testing the soundness of the civil works. Following its completion, the results will be submitted to receive the Railway Board technical sanction. Once the technical sanction is granted, the Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety (CMRS) will be invited to conduct the final inspection. Only after CMRS approval will the line be cleared for passenger operations, the official added.

He also said that the sequence of testing, approvals and inspections is critical to meet the targeted timeline. "If all clearances are secured as planned, the elevated section of the corridor is expected to be opened to the public in May as planned," he said.

The 21.3-km Pink Line from Kalena Agrahara to Nagawara is expected to be fully operational by September, 2026.

EXPRESS READ

BCCC removes illegal flexes put for Ugadi, Eid

Bengaluru: On the directions of Bengaluru Central City Corporation (BCCC) Commissioner Rajendra Cholan, civic workers and officials on Sunday removed unauthorised flexboards installed during the festivals of Ugadi and Ramazan in their jurisdictional areas. "Unauthorised installation of flexboards and banners affects the city's aesthetics. Placing them across roads, on trees and on electric poles obstructs public movement," Cholan said, adding that during heavy rain and strong winds, these boards may fall on motorists and pedestrians. Executive engineers, assistant executive engineers, and sanitation staff from respective divisions participated in the removal drive. **ENS**

110 PLOGGERS COLLECT 450 KG OF WASTE AT HSR, INSPIRE MANY

To encourage and recognise the efforts of the participants, the organisers distributed 90 prizes based on the quantity of waste each person collected | EXPRESS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE HSR Citizen Forum, in association with Greater Bengaluru Authority and Indian Ploggers Army, on Sunday collected over 450 kg of waste through plogging in and around HSR Layout. "The event witnessed participation of 110 citizens across all age groups, who came together to make their surroundings cleaner. The volunteers covered key stretches around Parangipalya and its surrounding areas," said activist Plog Raja (Nagaraj) of The Indian Ploggers Army.

To encourage and recognise the efforts of the participants, 90 prizes were distributed based on the quantity of waste collected.

The prizes were selected to promote sustainable living. Those who collected 5kg of waste were given seeds and compost kits to promote urban gardening, and those who collected 10 kg were given organic kumkum, millets, bamboo toothbrushes and eco-friendly napkins. Under the 15 kg category, groundnut oil, natural dishwashing powder and bio-enzyme cleaners were given. The 20 kg category received organic soaps, pocket bags, coco peat and collapsible tumblers.

"The initiative created a strong visual and social impact, drawing attention from residents and passers by. Many people appreciated the efforts and expressed interest in participating in future drives, reflecting a growing awareness towards civic responsibility," Plog Raja said.

"The immediate transformation of the streets during the drive served as a powerful demonstration of what collective citizen action can achieve," he said.

Horoscopes By Holiday

HOLIDAY MATHIS

23rd March : In the Mirror of Others We care how we are perceived because we can imagine how we are perceived. All humans have some form of self-model, and most are sensitive to how that self is perceived by others. Social Gemini moon in a profound trine with Pluto and squared to Mercury offers up a mirror. Gazing into it isn't about vanity, but about making sure one's existence registers in the social world.

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
It feels like the reward isn't enough or isn't there at all. That doesn't mean your work is meaningless. Yes, there are tedious aspects. Don't let exhaustion masquerade as philosophy. It all matters. Be sweet to yourself. Go easy.

TAURUS (Apr. 20 - May 20)
Today calls for resolution. What can you tie up or move along? You may feel something is over, but if another person is still wondering, the loop will remain open. The next phase can only begin after this one ends.

GEMINI (May 21 - June 21)
It seems counterintuitive, but losing doesn't make a person a loser. Losing means you're in the game, and being in the game means you're winning at life, even though you may not be winning at the game in question.

CANCER (June 22 - July 22)
You're asking the right questions today -- questions such as, "What are my thoughts and feelings trying to protect me from?" and "What can be learned from this?" It's better to relate to ideas than wrestle them.

LEO (July 23 - Aug. 22)
You'll make moves that don't have the intended outcome, and that's just part of the process. Calling them "mistakes" is shorthand for "different outcomes." You'll find there's something wonderful in what happens unexpectedly.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)
You're already good at thinking about what you want to do, so try it a different way today. It's fun and creative to think about what you want to feel first, then go from there. There are endless ways to get to the same feeling.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 - Oct. 23)
Habits can make your life better or worse. The new one you want to make will be easier than you think. Start now. Keep showing up. Soon the habit will carry you. You'll stop building it and it will build you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 21)
You don't need breakthroughs today. You need repetition. The basics are boring and powerful. In a way, it's a relief to know that you don't have to reinvent the wheel; you just have to show up and hit the basics over and over.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)
Your patience will be key -- it's the secret to effective communication. Hear others out. Pause to consider how to respond. Hold up your hand to slow the discourse. Taking that extra breath creates space for reflection.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)
There's more labor and responsibility in your world than people see. Instead of tightening your grip, look for leverage. What system can you adjust? What expectation can you lower? Put your strength where it counts, and let the rest redistribute.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)
A dip in the old self-esteem? No worries. Fluctuations are normal, and a high opinion of yourself doesn't always serve you anyway. The best scenario is not to be preoccupied with evaluating yourself at all. The flow state is unselfconscious.

PISCES (Feb. 19 - Mar 20)
Your imagination is powerful today, which means it can either inspire you or unsettle you. Before you follow a worry too far, ask what's actually happening right now. Reality is gentler than the story. Stay with what's tangible, and let the rest drift by.

Solutions to Saturday's puzzle ⬇

3					4		5	
8				6				
	4	1	5		2			8
1	3						2	
			6		7			
	9						4	1
5			7		1	2	8	
				9				3
	1		2					9

2	6	9	8	1	7	4	5	3
7	5	8	4	9	3	2	1	6
4	1	3	2	5	6	8	9	7
1	2	7	6	4	5	3	8	9
5	3	6	7	8	9	1	2	4
8	9	4	3	2	1	7	6	5
9	7	2	1	6	4	5	3	8
6	4	1	5	3	8	9	7	2
3	8	5	9	7	2	6	4	1

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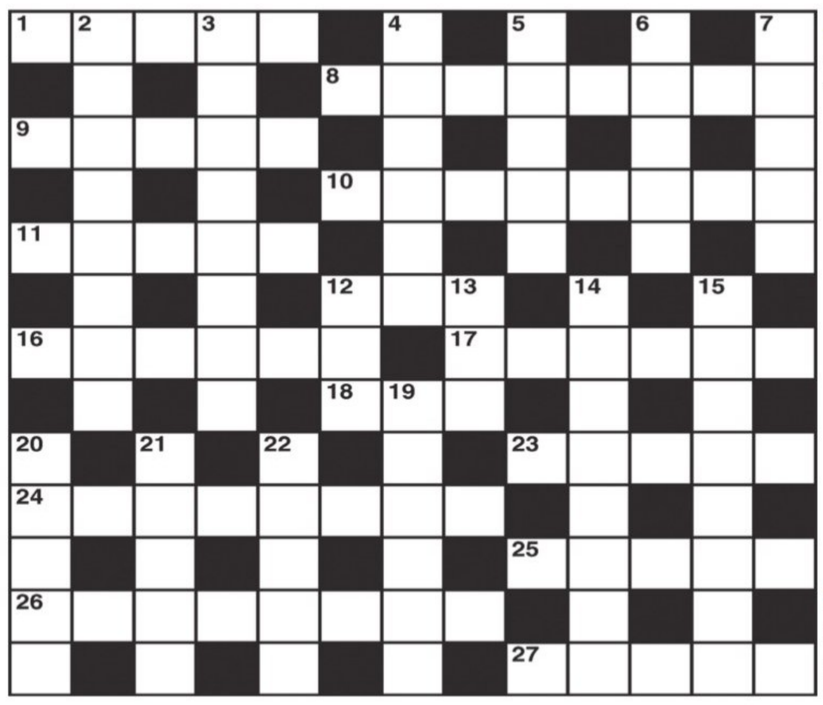
Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



CROSS WORD

ACROSS
1 Handle without charge (5)
8 Try as he may he just can't settle (8)
9 Where Westphalians may go to eat in Germany (5)
10 Condition written in merely to elucidate things (8)
11 Decree cited wrongly (5)
12 In the main it won't be laughing (3)
16 Projection time for movie equipment (6)
17 Diverts with morning exercises (6)
18 Highwayman on foot (3)
23 Way in which the sentry loses his head (5)
24 Stamps to commemorate a recent birth? (3,5)
25 Bohemian girl goes round a Florida resort (5)
26 Dance around on broken toe? Makes good story (8)
27 Girl cotton spinner (5)

DOWN
2 Used rail transport and left (8)
3 They represent people a long time since perhaps (8)
4 Girl in a Polish film (6)
5 Makes out some steps (5)
6 Measure a young animal with it (5)
7 Checks part of the rigging (5)
12 Singapore space centre (3)
13 The German comes up depressed (3)
14 Route financed by employers (8)
15 Bank go-between? (8)
19 Mature people possibly saluted out East (6)
20 Want we hear to work as a baker (5)
21 He may have the lot or about three quarters (5)
22 A team set apart (5)

SATURDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1 Permissive, 6 Arid, 10 Acted, 11 Be careful, 12 Moralist, 13 Steps, 15 Avarice, 17 Shampoo, 19 Spender, 21 Threads, 22 Atlas, 24 Consorts, 27 Thrashing, 28 Lasso, 29 Rock, 30 Centipedes.

Down: 1 Play, 2 Rationale, 3 India, 4 Sublime, 5 Vacates, 7 Rifle, 8 Doll's-house, 9 Fresh air, 14 Cause a stir, 16 In disuse, 18 Practised, 20 Receive, 21 Tonight, 23 Lyric, 25 Orlop, 26 Boss.

JUMBLE

UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

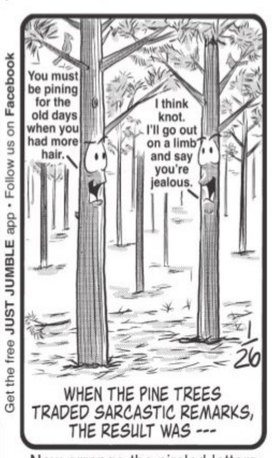
BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

UNBYN

ZRIEP

RGEEDD

GLIGEG


You must be pining for the old days when you had more hair.
I think knot. I'll go out on a limb and say you're jealous.
WHEN THE PINE TREES TRADED SARCASTIC REMARKS, THE RESULT WAS ---

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: FORUM TWEAK ACCEPT DISMAL
Answer: He didn't love the idea of buying the wood stove at first, but he — WARMED UP TO IT

Environmental activist Kabini Shivalinga has filed a complaint with the Karnataka Lokayukta alleging large-scale illegal construction and official complicity in the eco-sensitive zones surrounding the Kabini backwaters and the tiger reserves of Bandipur and Nagarhole. He claimed that vast tracts of government land within the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) are encroached upon by influential politicians and businessmen

3 WOMEN ON PILGRIMAGE DIE IN ACCIDENT

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

SIX persons, including three women, died in two separate accidents, in Bengaluru on Saturday night. The accidents occurred in the jurisdiction of Devanahalli and KR Puram traffic police stations.

A 15-day trip to Kashi and other temples organised by a Stree Shakthi group in Tiptur proved fatal for three women, in a horrific road accident near Kempegowda International Airport at 11.50 pm on Saturday. A group of 12 women and two others were travelling in a van from Tiptur, Tumakuru district, for a 6.30am flight at the airport. An open truck (TN 01 BA 2066) hit the left side of the van at Rani Cross flyover down ramp on NH 648, Devanahalli, killing the three women. Another woman sustained severe injuries while the others escaped with minor injuries.

The deceased, Jayamma (60), Yashodhamma (60), and Ganga (30), were all residents of Tiptur. They had started the journey from Tiptur around 9 pm. The injured are Pushparani, Chandramma, Vaishnavi, Kullu Jayamma, Padmamma, Uma, Susheelamma, Priyanka, Chandrakala, a three-year-old boy Srikanth and 21-year-old Ravi Teja. The truck that was coming on the flyover was going towards Hosakote.

The Devanahalli traffic police registered a case. An officer said, "The van driver was following directions on Google Maps to the airport. He was supposed to enter the service road while coming from the Dabaspete on NH 648, but overshot. While making a U-turn at Rani Cross, a truck hit the left side of the van".

Three killed as auto rear-ends parked truck

Three persons, Manikanta (39), Suresh (35), and Srinivas (35), from Whitefield have died in an accident reported in KR Puram traffic limits. The incident occurred around 11.30pm on the upper ramp of the Medahalli flyover, Old Madras Road. The trio was travelling in a goods autorickshaw, towards KR Puram. Suresh, the autorickshaw driver, rammed a potato-laden truck that parked by the roadside due to a flat tyre. The truck was coming towards the city from Kolar. The truck driver was replacing the tyre when the incident happened. The truck was parked without any parking lights, sign boards or reflectors to caution approaching vehicles. The goods auto driver, unable to see the truck in the dark, rear-ended it.

LAMBORGHINI DONUT

Muthappa Rai's son Ricky gets cop notice

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

REFORMED underworld don late Muthappa Rai's son Ricky Rai is again in news for all the wrong reasons. Ricky is suspected to have been involved in the white colour Lamborghini sports car donut incident at Anil Kumble Junction in the early hours of Saturday.

Footage from multiple CCTVs checked by the Cubbon Park traffic police tracked the car to Ricky's residence in Sadashivanagar. But the police have not confirmed if Ricky was driving the car. A notice was issued to him to appear before the inspector at the Cubbon Park traffic police.

It is not clear if the car is owned by Ricky as there was no accurate information when the traffic police checked for the ownership details online. The car was reportedly seized from Ricky's residence in Sadashivanagar.

"Around 8 am, the car was towed from Sadashivanagar to the traffic police station on Kasturba Road. The police managed to trace the car within 24 hours. The ownership details of the car are still to be found. Since the car was found at Ricky's house, a notice has been served to him to find out the details of the person driving the car and also the ownership details. The police are also checking if a fake registration number was used for the car. The traffic police have written to the Transport department officials to provide us details of the vehicle documents. The police are checking if the car had valid insurance or there was any road tax evasion," said a police officer.

The Lamborghini (KA 05 NR 0009) doing donuts -- performing spins -- at Anil Kumble Circle on Saturday around 2 am had been filmed by some motorists passing by. The police registered a suo motu case on Saturday and registered a case of rash driving on a public way under Section 281 of the BNS against an unknown car driver.

Ricky had earlier landed in trouble for allegedly staging a murder attempt on him at his father's mansion in Bidadi some months ago.

B'luru DRI seizes drugs worth Rs 8.3cr; 3 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

OFFICERS of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Bengaluru Zonal Unit, intercepted a 26-year-old male passenger of Mizoram origin upon his arrival from New Delhi at KSR Railway Station, Bengaluru. Approximately 8.3kg of a psychotropic substance (suspected to be methamphetamine hydrochloride (popularly known as Crystal Meth) was recovered. The approximate illicit market value is considered Rs 8.3 crore. Two more people linked to the case were also intercepted at separate locations in Bengaluru. Both individuals are residents, aged approximately 25 and 29 years. "Police recovered around 200 SIM cards, 45 debit/credit cards, and multiple mobiles from one of the accused's places. The seized contraband and other incriminating materials have been taken into custody under the provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985," DRI release stated.

FILTHY ISSUE

Pedestrians have a tough time to use the pavement due to the continues overflow of sewage near Freedom Park | KEVIN NASHON

Popping pills for health: Doctors flag rise in unnecessary supplement use, limited benefits

GAYATHRI M KURUP @ Bengaluru

THE growing consumption of supplements and nutraceuticals is raising concerns among doctors. Dr Shaibya Saldanha, a consultant gynecologist said, "Many of these supplements have multiple ingredients in unclear doses. We often do not know if they are actually addressing the needs of the patient". She said that multivitamins are frequently prescribed for symptoms like fatigue, "If a patient has a specific deficiency, they require a targeted dose. In multivitamins, the quantity is often too low to make a real difference". Dr Saldanha cautioned against unnecessary medication, "When a patient feels weak, they are often asked to take a multivitamin. But in reality, short-term illness does not create a vitamin deficiency. There is often no need for it."

However, experts say the issue cannot be viewed in isolation from India's nutritional realities. Sylvia Karpagam, public health doctor and researcher said, "The problem is also because of insufficient nutrition from the diets". She pointed out that anaemia in India is rarely due to iron deficiency alone. "To make haemoglobin, the body needs vitamin B12, folate, zinc, vitamin A and good quality protein. Without protein, you cannot even form haemoglobin," she said. Multiple deficiencies often go undiagnosed, particularly among women. Karpagam also questioned the tendency to blame patients for self-medication. "We need to ask why people are going over the counter. Are symptoms being taken seriously? Are patients being overburdened with tests?" she asked.

Dr. Veena Shatrugna, a Bengaluru based Clinical Nutritionist said, "A single pill cannot replace or match the nourishment of a balanced diet. People either lack access to a nutritious diet or choose to restrict their intake for lifestyle reasons. In both these cases, have caused an increase in supplements use, and the market is capitalising on this."

While supplements may help in diagnosed deficiencies, experts stress that they cannot replace a balanced diet, and should be used only when necessary and for a limited duration.

EXPRESS READ

Man with criminal background chased and killed following dispute

BENGALURU: A 27-year-old man with criminal background was chased and murdered in the early hours of Sunday in Ramamurthy Nagar police limits. Two accused involved in the crime were arrested. The deceased, Kiran, was a resident of KR Puram. He had a few cases registered against him at the KR Puram and other police stations. The accused, S Yuvaraj (28), an auto driver, and S Gangaraj (26), a private firm employee, attacked Kiran on the Kalkere Main Road near Bhovi Colony between 4 am and 4.30 am. The accused who came in an auto got into an argument with Kiran. It soon turned into a scuffle. When Kiran tried to flee, the accused chased and hit his head with an iron rod and killed him. The officer said the duo was arrested on Sunday afternoon and the motive is to be ascertained. **ENS**

Eight students brutally punished for playing without permission

CHIKKAMAGALURU: Eight students were brutally thrashed by a principal and his staff for disobedience. The incident was reported from Ekalavya residential school at Taruve, in Mudigere taluk. On Saturday, principal Sathish Prasad Jaiswal noticed eight students playing in the school playground without permission. He allegedly thrashed them with a plastic pipe and a belt before confining them to the cellar. The students' cries for help were heard by the workers from the neighboring coffee estate. They informed the Banakal police who rescued the confined students and promised action against the wrong-doers. Angered parents and public protested outside the school, demanding the suspension of Satish and staffers Shubham and Lokesh. **ENS**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **SMT.SUDHA RAMPRASAD** w/o late Nadipuram Ramaprasad, has misplaced/lost the following original documents of the Schedule property and not been able to trace these documents despite diligent efforts. An E-complaint has been filed with Bangalore City police vide report no.2109110/2026 dated 14-03-2026.

Documents misplaced/Lost:

1. MEMO of the possession bearing PR No.66/1964-65 issued to N.Gopalakrishna Iyengar, by the City Improvement Trust Board dated 30.03.1965/5.4.1965
2. Absolute Sale Deed dated 03.08.1988 executed by the Bengaluru Development Authority in favour of Smt. Mahalakshamma, registered in the office of Sub-registrar, Rajajinagar, Bangalore, bearing document No.2005/1988-89, Book-I, Volume No.913.
3. Release deed in favour of Nadipuram G Ramaprasad, executed on 18-3-2002 and registered as Document No.6385/2001-02, Book-I, C.D.No.3 dated 20.03.2002, in the office of Sub-Registrar, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru

Therefore, any person who may have found or is in possession of the aforesaid original documents is hereby called upon to deliver the same to the undersigned within **Fifteen (15) days** from the date of publication of this notice.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the property bearing No.56/46, (CITB No.56), situated at 12th 'C' Main Road, Rajajinagar 6th Block, Bengaluru – 560010, E-PID No.7203453368, measuring East to West:40 feet and North to South:30 feet, totally measuring 1200 Sq.ft, having built up area of 1510 Sq.feet, and bounded on the:

East by : Site bearing No.147;
West by : Road;
North by : Site bearing No.57;
South by : Site bearing No.55.

Abhijith Atur, Advocate
M/s Agraa Legal,
3rd Floor, Shravanee Krishna Mansion, Ashoka Pillar Road, Jayanagar 2nd Block, Bengaluru 560011, Ph: (080) 2962001/02
Email:admin@agraalegal.com

Date: 23.03.2026
Place: Bangalore

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Website: www.amanath-bank.com, E-mail: ceo@amanath-bank.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mandatory KYC Update for Customers - REMINDER

In continuation to our earlier publication issued on 20.02.2026, All the valued customers are hereby informed that in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India, it is mandatory for banks to periodically update the Know Your Customer (KYC) details of their customers.

All customers who have not updated their KYC documents are requested to visit their respective branches and complete the KYC updation process at the earliest. Customers are required to carry the following documents:

- Proof of Identity (Aadhaar Card, PAN Card, Passport, Voter ID, etc.)
- Proof of Address (Utility Bill, Passport, Aadhaar Card, etc.)
- Recent Passport-size Photographs
- PAN Card (mandatory as per banking norms)

Please note that customers who have not maintained the stipulated minimum balance and who fails to update KYC details in their accounts will be closed after 15 days from the date of this notice. For further information or assistance, customers are requested to contact their respective branches during working hours.

Dated: 17.03.2026
General Manager (I/c) & Acting CEO

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JANA SMALL FINANCE BANK
(A Scheduled Commercial Bank)
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DEMAND NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF SARFAESI ACT, 2002.

Whereas you the below mentioned Borrower's, Co-Borrower's, Guarantor's and Mortgagors have availed loans from **Jana Small Finance Bank Limited,** by mortgaging your immovable properties. Consequent to default committed by you all, your loan account has been classified as **Non-performing Asset,** whereas **Jana Small Finance Bank Limited** being a secured creditor under the Act, and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(2) of the said Act read with rule 2 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued **Demand notice** calling upon the Borrower's/ Co-Borrower's/ Guarantor's/ Mortgagors as mentioned in column No.2 to repay the amount mentioned in the notices with future interest thereon within **60 days** from the date of notice, but the notices could not be served on some of them for various reasons.

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ Mortgagor	Loan Account No. & Loan Amount	Details of the Security to be enforced	Date of NPA & Demand Notice date	Amount Due in Rs. / as on
1	1) Mr. Devaraju, S/o. Rudraiah, 2) Mrs. Kalavathi, W/o. Devaraju	Loan Account No. 45350430001140 Loan Amount: Rs.3,74,000/-	**Mortgaged Immovable Property:** All that piece and parcel of the RDPR No. 152900203900220087 Khaneshumari No.7/238 measuring East to West 13.1064 meters, North to South 13.716 meters, at situated at Bheemagondanahalli Village, Hosadurga Grama Panchyath, Kodihalli Hobli, Kanakapura Thluk, Ramanagara District and **Bounded on: East by:** Property of Manjubai, **West by:** Property of Madevibai, **North by:** Govt. Road, **South by:** Property of Chikkamarinaik.	Date of NPA: 03-03-2026 Demand Notice Date: 17.03.2026	Rs.3,36,713.25 (Rupees Three Lakh Thirty Six Thousand Seven Hundred Thirteen and Twenty Five Paisa Only) due as on 12-03-2026 and interest thereon
2	1) Mr. Manjunatha T E, S/o. Eranna, 2) Mrs. Nanjamma, W/o. Eranna	Loan Account No. 46989630001001 46989410000754 Loan Amount: Rs.2,47,000/- Rs.74,000/-	**Mortgaged Immovable Property:** All the piece and parcel of the property bearing, Property No.68/1A, Electronic Katha No.15030030260060288, situated at Lakshmidevipura Village comes within the purview of Hadoanahalli Grama Panchayath, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bangalore Rural District, Measuring East-West 7.62 mtrs, North-South 10.0584 mtrs, totally measuring 76.65 Sq.mtrs and **Bounded on: East by:** Way and Own property, **West by:** Own property, **North by:** Own property, **South by:** Property of Chikkapaiah.	Date of NPA: 03-03-2026 Demand Notice Date: 17.03.2026	Rs.2,44,828.08 (Rupees Two Lakh Forty Four Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Eight and Eight Paisa Only) due as on 12-03-2026 and interest thereon

Notice is therefore given to the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor & Mortgagor as mentioned in Column No.2, calling upon them to make payment of the aggregate amount as shown in column No.6, against all the respective Borrower/ Co-Borrower within **60 days** of Publication of this notice as the said amount is found payable in relation to the respective loan account as on the date shown in Column No. 6. It is made clear that if the aggregate amount together with future interest and other amounts which may become payable till the date of payment, is not paid, **Jana Small Finance Bank Limited** shall be constrained to take appropriate action for enforcement of security interest upon properties as described in Column No.4. Please note that this publication is made without prejudice to such rights and remedies as are available to **Jana Small Finance Bank Limited** against the Borrower's/ Co-Borrower's/ Guarantor's/ Mortgagors of the said financials under the law, you are further requested to note that as per section 13(13) of the said act, you are restrained/ prohibited from disposing of or dealing with the above security or transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise of the secured asset without prior consent of Secured Creditor.

Date: 21.03.2026, Place: Bangalore Rural **Sd/- Authorised Officer, For Jana Small Finance Bank Limited**

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Haveri MP and former CM Basavaraj Bommai said the Technical Advisory Committee has approved the Upper Bhadra Project and expressed confidence that it will soon be implemented with the cooperation of both Central and State governments

CASE OF THE VANISHING GIRLS

The number of missing girls and women in Karnataka is showing a steady and alarming uptick. The trend could be linked to trafficking, and is also intertwined with social, economic and tech factors

KARTHIK K K @ Mysuru

A disturbing pattern is emerging across Karnataka, that reflects both the scale of vulnerability among women and girls, and the systemic challenges in ensuring their safety.

From 2023 to February 2026, a staggering 52,438 women and girls were reported missing across the state. While a majority have been traced, 3,255 individuals remain unaccounted for, raising serious questions about gaps in investigation, tracking mechanisms, and preventive frameworks. Data accessed by *TNIE* reveals not only a steady increase in the number of missing cases year after year, but also a troubling surge in the number of untraced individuals, particularly minor girls.

The trend has set off alarm bells among law enforcement agencies, child rights activists and policymakers, who warn that the numbers may be symptomatic of deeper social and economic vulnerabilities.

Rising numbers, shrinking assurances

The data paints a complex picture. In 2023, Karnataka reported 2,133 cases of missing girls, of which only 40 remained untraced, a recovery rate exceeding 98 per cent, which initially appeared reassuring.

However, the following years saw a gradual erosion of this efficiency. In 2024, the number of missing girls rose to 2,433, marking a 14.06 per cent increase over the previous year. More concerning was the rise in untraced cases to 87—more than double the 2023 figure.

The trend worsened in 2025, when 2,620 girls were reported missing, a 7.69 per cent increase from 2024. What alarmed observers most was the dramatic spike in untraced cases to 515, indicating a significant drop in tracing efficiency. The situation in early 2026 appears even more worrying. As of February 20, 426 girls have already been reported missing, with 360 still untraced.

While officials caution that many of these cases are under active investigation and recovery rates may improve over time, the proportion of untraced cases at this stage remains unusually high.

In total, 7,612 girls have gone missing since 2023, with 1,002 still untraced.

Women: A parallel concern

The trend is not limited to minors. Missing cases involving adult women have also shown a steady rise. In 2023, 13,392 women were reported missing, with 293 untraced. The number increased to 14,272 in 2024, marking a 6.57 per cent rise, while untraced cases climbed to 343.

In 2025, the number of missing women rose further to 15,027— an increase of 5.29 per cent over the previous year. However, the number of untraced women surged dramatically to 832, more than doubling from 2023. In 2026 so far, 2,135 women have been reported missing, with 785 yet to be traced. Overall, 44,826 adult women have gone missing in the past three years, of whom 2,253 remain untraced.

BIG PICTURE

Despite these figures, police maintain that the overall recovery rate remains relatively high —about 86.8 per cent for girls and nearly 95 per cent for women. Yet, the sharp increase in untraced cases, especially in 2025 and early 2026, has raised concerns about emerging challenges that may be undermining recovery efforts.

What's driving the trend?

Experts caution against viewing missing cases purely through a law-and-order lens. Instead, they argue that the issue is deeply intertwined with social, economic, and technological changes.

Many cases, police say, involve family disputes, elopements, or migration for employment. A senior police officer said a significant number of missing persons is traced within weeks. However, cases involving minors are treated with the highest priority due to the heightened risk of trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced labour.

Activists and experts point to a range of underlying factors —poverty, lack of education, domestic violence, child marriage, and the lure of urban employment. Increasing digital exposure has added a new dimension to the problem. According to Parashuram ML, co-founder of Odanadi Seva Samsthe and a former member of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, social media has emerged as a critical factor in recent years. "Young girls, particularly those with unsupervised access to social media, are increasingly vulnerable," he said. "Many form online friendships that later turn exploitative. In some cases, this leads to trafficking. There are also instances where minors elope and go into hiding until they turn 18 to avoid legal consequences."

He added that addiction to substances and digital platforms is becoming a growing concern among adolescents, pushing them into risky situations. Among adult women, cases linked to illicit relationships and attempts to escape difficult domestic environments are also on the rise.

While not all missing cases are linked to criminal activity, experts warn that a significant proportion may involve human trafficking networks. Karnataka, with its expanding urban centres and migration corridors, has increasingly become both a source and transit point for trafficking.

Children and young women from economically weaker backgrounds are particularly vulnerable. They are often lured with promises of jobs, education or marriage, only to be pushed into exploitative situations. Activists argue that the rise in untraced cases could indicate the growing sophistication of trafficking networks, which exploit gaps in coordination between states and jurisdictions.

EXPRESS ILLUSTRATION

RISING NUMBERS

Year	2023	2024	2024	2026
REPORTED				
Missing girls	2,133	2,433	2,620	426
Missing women	13,392	14,272	15,027	2,135
UNTRACED				
Missing girls	40	87	515	360
Missing women	293	343	832	785

Many form online friendships that later turn exploitative. In some cases, this leads to trafficking

Parashuram ML, co-founder of Odanadi Seva Samsthe

Institutional response

The alarming data has drawn the attention of the judiciary as well. The Karnataka High Court recently sought a detailed response from the state on the nature of investigation into missing persons cases. In response, Advocate-General K Shashikiran Shetty informed the court that several measures have been initiated to strengthen the system. These include a circular dated January 21, 2026, providing for the establishment of District/Division Missing Persons Units (DMPUs) and dedicated Missing Persons Squads.

Additionally, Standing Order No. 1054, issued on January 29, 2026, consolidates earlier guidelines and standard operating procedures for handling missing persons cases. The order lays down a structured protocol for police to follow upon receiving a missing complaint, with special emphasis on cases involving children. The measures also mandate improved coordination with Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), enhanced monitoring of digital portals, and timely uploading of data related to missing persons.

However, the High Court has underscored that the existence of such mechanisms is not enough. In a pointed observation, the court noted that "it cannot be lost sight of that a large number of complaints relating to missing persons, including minor children and young girls, are reported across the state... families are left without any meaningful information for long periods".

The court stressed that institutional mechanisms must not remain "on paper" but should be effectively operationalised.

Policing challenges

Law enforcement agencies acknowledge that tracking missing persons has become more complex in recent years. Increased mobility, digital anonymity, and interstate migration make it harder to trace individuals quickly.

Police have been strengthening coordination with railway authorities, cyber monitoring teams, and interstate agencies. Technological tools, including facial recognition and data analytics, are also being deployed to improve tracing efficiency.

However, gaps remain. Delays in filing complaints, lack of awareness among families, and limited resources at the local level often hinder timely action. Activists also point out that social stigma and fear of legal repercussions sometimes prevent families from reporting cases promptly, especially in situations involving elopement or domestic disputes.

Behind the statistics lie thousands of families grappling with uncertainty and distress. For every untraced case, there are parents, siblings, and children waiting for answers, often for months or even years. The psychological toll on families is immense, compounded by the lack of consistent updates or clarity about the progress of investigation. Experts say that improving communication with families should be a key component of any missing persons strategy. Regular updates, counselling support and transparency in investigation processes can help alleviate some of the distress.

The way forward

Addressing the issue of missing women and girls requires a multi-pronged approach that goes beyond policing.

First, there is a need for stronger preventive measures. This includes community awareness programmes, especially in rural and vulnerable areas, to educate families and children about the risks associated with trafficking and online exploitation.Second, schools and colleges must play a more active role in counselling and monitoring students, particularly those at risk of dropping out or facing family issues. Third, there is an urgent need to regulate and monitor digital spaces more effectively. While social media platforms offer opportunities, they also expose young users to risks that require proactive intervention. Fourth, coordination between states must be strengthened. Many missing persons cross state borders, making interstate collaboration critical for timely recovery. Finally, accountability mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that investigations are conducted efficiently and lapses are addressed promptly.

Parashuram said adherence to Supreme Court guidelines and effective implementation of policies are crucial. "The government, police and all stakeholders must work in coordination and act with urgency. Every missing case is not just a statistic, it is a life at risk," he said.

With the state witnessing a steady rise in cases year after year, the need for a robust, responsive and compassionate system has never been greater. The real test lies not in the creation of policies, but in their execution, ensuring that no missing person is forgotten, and no family is left without hope.

Case against tahsildar office staff in land forgery case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga

AN FIR has been registered and an investigation initiated against the staff of the Sagar tahsildar office for allegedly creating fake government documents for monetary gains and attempting to allot land to private individuals, Deputy Commissioner Prabhuling Kavalikatti said.

The Deputy Commissioner stated in a press release that the racket involved collecting money from private individuals by promising land allotment and preparing forged government records. The fraud was exposed by Sagar Tahsildar Rashmi Halesh.

The FIR has been registered against six accused at the Sagar Town police station and further investigation is under way.

The irregularities came to light on March 18 when the tahsildar personally noticed the record room supervisor altering old allotment documents. Officials said the accused were creating fake records to facilitate illegal allotment of government land to private individuals.

Authorities have initiated appropriate legal action against those involved in these illegal activities at the tahsildar office. The DC urged the public to remain cautious and not fall prey to such fraudulent practices.

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy greets Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi. JDS leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy accompaied his father

HDK meets Shah, discusses renomination of Gowda to RS

BENGALURU: Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Saturday evening and discussed state politics. According to informed sources, Kumaraswamy also discussed re-nomination of his father and former PM HD Deve Gowda to Rajya Sabha as his term ends in June. "Former CM BS Yediyurappa, his son and state BJP president BY Vijayendra want to nominate former union minister and former CM DV Sadananda Gowda. It is in this backdrop that Kumaraswamy met Shah," sources added. Kumraswamy also expressed his dissatisfaction over the state BJP not taking alliance partner JDS into confidence in decision making with regard to protests against the ruling Congress and also selection of candidates for the forthcoming election to four MLC seats. Kumraswamy was accompanied by his son and JDS youth wing president Nikhil. "We also exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and reaffirmed our shared commitment towards public service and national development," Kumaraswamy posted on social media platform 'X'.

Cong sticks to old formula, gives ticket to Meti's son, Shamanur's grandson

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI
@ BENGALURU

THE Congress on Sunday announced Umesh Meti and Samarth Mallikarjun as the party candidates for bypolls to Bagalkot and Davangere South assembly constituencies, respectively. While Umesh Meti is the son of former minister late HY Meti, Samarth Mallikarjun is the grandson of late MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

Bypolls for Bagalkot and Davanagere South were necessitated following the death of Congress MLAs Meti, a Kuruba leader, and Shamanur Shivashankarappa, a Veerashiva Lingayat strongman. The Congress high command weighed its options and ultimately decided not to risk an experiment of fielding 'fresh faces'. As for Davanagere South, the high command, especially AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge who has a good relationship with the Shamanur family, went by the advice of DCM DK Shivakumar and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre. Khandre is president of All India Veerashaiva Lingayat Mahasabha, a post he was appointed to after the death of Shamanur.

Samarth, son of Horticulture Minister SS Mallikarjun and Davanagere MP Prabha Mallikarjun, had filed his nomination papers on Friday, before the high command took a call. He will file his papers again on Monday with the party's 'B Form', in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is scheduled to visit Davanagere and Bagalkot. Muslims, who make up a sizable voter base of over 75,000 compared to Lingayats, had staked claim for the seat. However, the high command decided to field the late MLA's family member and give Muslims more representation in the MLC polls. The Bagalkot seat too saw stiff competition from Meti's children, which was finally resolved by CM Siddaramaiah.

POLL WALL

The Congress party now faces the challenge of retaining both seats it won in 2023, as the bypoll results could be an indicator of upcoming elections, including the 2028 Assembly polls. Analysts noted that there is no sympathy wave for Meti's family in Bagalkot or for Samarth in Davanagere South, but the candidates are likely to gain from the deceased leaders' staunch supporters.

In Bagalkot, the BJP has fielded veteran leader and former MLA Veeranna Charantimath, who had narrowly lost the seat to Meti in 2023. In Davanagere South, the party is experimenting with ST Nayaka leader Srinivas T Dasakariyappa, aiming to polarise SC, ST, OBC and Hindu votes. The party is hoping to cash in on anti-incumbency this time. The JDS will back its alliance partner BJP.

There is a likelihood of Muslim leaders contesting as independents to avenge the Congress not considering their candidature, which could eat into the party votebank. Meanwhile, the Eknath Shinde faction of Shiv Sena has also decided to field its candidates.

BJP leaders hail Modi completing 8,931 days in office as head of state

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

BJP leaders from Karnataka expressed happiness over Prime Minister Narendra Modi becoming the longest serving head of government in India completing 8,931 days in office.

Calling Modi an "extraordinary leader", BJP National Parliamentary Board member BS Yediyurappa said, "His tireless devotion to serve people knows no pause, no fleeting indulgence in rest or recreation. Has the world ever witnessed him steal a moment for himself either as CM or now as PM amid the ceaseless symphony of service? Never! For he is the 'Prime Minister with a sacred mission,' a blazing torchbearer driven by an unyielding vow: to lift our cherished nation and its countless millions from the shadowed chains of poverty and underdevelopment, weaving magical threads of progress and prosperity into the very fabric of India's destiny."

Chitradurga MP Govind Karjol said, "These past 8931 days of PM Modiji's leadership can be summed up as one mega effort towards poverty alleviation and development." Speaking to reporters in Hubballi on Sunday, state BJP president BY Vijayendra said that under Modi's leadership, the country is moving on the path of security and development, and the country will occupy the position of global leader in the coming days. "I firmly believe he is going to break more records in the future also. He is a living symbol of hard work, discipline and continuous development of the country whether it is in setting up infrastructure for development or galvanising efforts to uplift the marginalised and poor," Vijayendra told *The New Indian Express*.

LoP in Council Chalavadi Narayanswamy said Prime Minister Modi was a living example for the entire nation and is a role model for the present and future leaders.

Former MLC ACP Abdul Azeem said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 12-year journey in office reflects a rare blend of tireless governance and unwavering commitment to public service. In many ways, it draws a parallel with Ashoka the Great, who placed duty above personal comfort and worked relentlessly for the progress of his empire."

An 18-year-old migrant worker was found dead with injuries under mysterious circumstances near a SIDCO industrial unit in Chennai on Friday, a day after he allegedly left his workplace without permission. The deceased was identified as Amit Kumar from Bhagalpur in Bihar

WEST ASIA CRISIS

Russian oil tanker Aqua Titan arrives at New Mangalore Port | EXPRESS

LPG cargo from US arrives at Mangaluru port

Russian oil tanker Aqua Titan also docs

DIVYA CUTINHO @ Mangaluru

PROVIDING major relief to oil marketing companies and households amid supply disruptions due to the West Asia crisis, a cargo vessel carrying Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) arrived at the New Mangalore Port from the Port of Nederland in Texas, U.S., on Sunday morning.

Sources from the New Mangalore Port told The New Indian Express that the vessel, Pyxis Pioneer, carrying 46,961 tonnes of LPG, of which 16,714.867 tonnes is for Mangaluru, was sailing under the Singapore flag.

The cargo was received by Aegis Logistics C/o Sealord, which has an LPG terminal at Mangalore Port. The facility has a storage capacity of 82,000 tonnes. The remaining cargo of 18,000 tonnes will be discharged at Kandla Port in Gujarat, and 12,200 tonnes in Mumbai.

Meanwhile, another vessel, Aqua Titan, carrying 96,099.807 tonnes of crude oil, arrived from Primorsk in Russia at Single Mooring Point (SPM) at the New Mangalore Port anchorage on Saturday night. It was received by the Mangalore Refinery & Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL). Aqua Titan was originally headed to China, but was diverted to India few days ago.

Sources said that the LPG is supplied through pipeline from Mangaluru to Mysuru, Hassan, and Bengaluru and through bullet tankers to Kerala, Goa, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu.

Also, the Russian vessel Oasis, carrying 99,900 tonnes of crude oil, is expected to arrive at 6 am on March 23, and the cargo will be discharged for MRPL.

Another LPG carrier, Apollo Ocean, sailing under the Vietnamese flag, is expected to arrive at New Mangalore Port on March 25 and unload 17,600 tonnes of LPG for Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and 9,087.157 tonnes for Aegis Logistics.

> *LPG is supplied through a pipeline from Mangaluru to Mysuru, Hassan and Bengaluru, and through bullet tankers to Kerala, Goa, TG, and Tamil Nadu*
> - Source

> *With exports completely stopped, we are left with no buyers for our produce. Fruits are highly perishable, and delays mean direct losses*
> -A farmer

Farmers in Kurugodu and Siruguppa taluks are among the worst affected | EXPRESS

West Asia crisis hits Ballari's fig farmers

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR
@ Kurugodu (Ballari district)

ESCALATING tensions in the Middle East have dealt a severe blow to fig (anjur) farmers in Ballari district, leaving growers and traders staring at heavy losses during what was expected to be a profitable season. Farmers in Kurugodu and Siruguppa taluks, which account for nearly 80% of Karnataka's fig cultivation, are among the worst affected.

Spread across more than 1,100 hectares, fig farming in the region had shown promising growth this year, with cultivators anticipating strong demand and better prices in international markets.

However, the sudden disruption of exports to key Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia has brought trade to a standstill. These nations have traditionally been major buyers of Ballari's figs, and the ongoing conflict has halted shipments entirely. "With exports completely stopped, we are left with no buyers for our produce. The fruits are highly perishable, and delays mean direct losses," a farmer from Kurugodu told *TNIE*. Many growers had invested heavily in irrigation, fertilisers, and labour, hoping to recover costs through export-driven sales. Usually, farmers get between Rs 8,000 and Rs 12,000 per quintal as yield value, and wet and dry figs fetch separate prices.

The crisis has also hit middlemen and traders who play a crucial role in marketing and distribution. With no export channels available, they are struggling to manage procurement and sales, further worsening the situation for farmers. Local markets are unable to absorb the sudden surplus, leading to a sharp fall in prices. Farmers now fear that a large portion of their yield may go to waste if alternative markets are not identified.

Agricultural experts have urged the government to step in with support measures, including price stabilisation, procurement assistance, and exploring new domestic or international markets. Without timely intervention, the livelihoods of hundreds of farming families in the region could be at risk.

UNESCO asks Centre to adhere to framework on Aghanashini river project

AMIT S UPADHYE @ Hubballi

UNITED Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has responded to a representation submitted by environmental activist Ravindra Nayak from Sirsi regarding the proposed Aghanashini river-linking project. The organisation has advised the Centre to follow the regulations related to World Heritage Conservation.

UNESCO stated that any development or river-linking project must comply with the norms set under World Heritage Conservation frameworks and should not harm the ecological balance. On February 17, 2026, a memorandum was submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre opposing the Aghanashini–Vedavathi river linking project. The representation highlighted environmental, ecological, and geographical concerns, especially considering the sensitive Western Ghats. The protest forum strongly objected to the project. Thousands of families are expected to be affected, and memorandums were submitted to both central and state governments opposing the project. The letter further mentioned that the Western Ghats, recognised as a World Heritage site, holds immense ecological importance. As per the 1972 World Heritage Convention, protection and conservation of such natural heritage is the responsibility of the respective countries. "UNESCO has emphasised that any project in such ecologically sensitive zones must strictly adhere to conservation norms and sustainable practices.

"The organisation has also acknowledged the concerns raised by activists and appreciated the efforts taken to protect the environment and natural heritage," said advocate Ravindra Naik who had submitted the objection against the river linking project to UNESCO.

The government plans to get 35 tmc ft of water from Aghanashini and pump it to Vedavati river. Naik said that the project is highly unscientific and will snatch the water security, especially of the Western Ghats. "The rainfall records show that 45 tmc ft of water can be collected in the proposed dam building point in Siddapur and the project aims to pump out 35 tmc ft of water. We are fighting against the project when it is in the initial stage and we have involved local communities explaining to them about the ill-effects of river diversions. About 25,000 signatures of people have been sent to Central Water Board," he said.

FAITH ENDURES

Devotees stand in queue to ascend the 'Pathinettam Padi' at the Sabarimala temple. The hill shrine was opened at 5 pm on Sunday in the presence of tantri Kandararu Mahesh Mohanaru for the celebration of the annual 10-day festival | EXPRESS

PFA & forest dept launch Op Quench Thirst

ENS @ Bengaluru

NON government organisation People for Animals (PFA), in collaboration with the state forest department, has launched operation Quench Thirst to create water sources for the wildlife in Turahalli forest.

With intense heat and harsh summer prevailing in Bengaluru, the number of animals and birds collapsing due to dehydration has increased. Wildlife rescuers and members of PFA said they have been receiving five to seven rescue calls every day. Rescuers said many wild animals and birds were found collapsed due to extreme heat and lack of water resources in both residential and forested areas.

In 2025, PFA rescued 153 black kites, 33 barn owls, 12 rose-ringed parakeets, 10 jungle crows, five Asian koels, four Indian spectacled cobras, two peafowls, three-striped palm squirrels and one Indian jackal.

The NGO's Chief Wildlife Veterinarian Colonel Dr Navaz Shariff said, "Besides birds, seven spotted deer were rescued along forest boundaries, often after being hit by vehicles or attacked by feral dogs when they ventured out in search of water. During peak summer, dehydration-related rescues surge by nearly 30%. We are focusing on replenishing critical water sources inside Turahalli forest through daily water tanker deployments and installation of water troughs which have been installed across Turahalli and KB Kaval forests, ensuring that wildlife has access to water within their natural habitat. The forest has a wide range of wildlife, including leopards, spotted deer, wild boars, golden jackals, mongooses, hares and peafowls."

EXPRESS READ

Majhi launches water projects worth ₹2,612cr

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday launched a slew of irrigation projects worth Rs 2,612 crore and called for collective action to conserve water. The projects were unveiled during the state-level observance of World Water Day-2026 at Lok Seva Bhawan here. The chief minister laid the foundation stone for 17 projects worth around Rs 2,292 crore and inaugurated 124 projects costing about Rs 320 crore. The initiatives are aimed at strengthening irrigation infrastructure, ensuring access to drinking water, and promoting water conservation. He also unveiled the target to increase crop intensity to 220% by 2036. **ENS**

6 days after SCB fire tragedy, govt axes superintendent

BHUBANESWAR: Six days after the devastating fire at the SCB Medical College and Hospital claimed 12 lives, the state government on Sunday finally removed the institution superintendent and appointed a successor. The belated administrative action came amid mounting public anger and political pressure. According to a notification issued by the Health and Family Welfare department, head of the department of forensic medicine and toxicology at SCB MCH Prof Jyotish Chandra Choudhury has been appointed superintendent of the premier medical institution. **ENS**

Several accounts frozen, ₹90L recovered

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

INVESTIGATORS have since frozen several bank accounts linked to the accused and managed to trace Rs 90 lakh and block it from being withdrawn. A special team has been formed to track the perpetrators and recover the remaining amount. Belagavi Police Commissioner Bhushan Gulabrao Borse said that no legal provision of digital arrest exists in India and urged citizens not to fall prey to such threats or claims. He said no law-enforcement agency in the country conducts the investigation through WhatsApp calls.

Cybercrime officials warned that fraudsters are increasingly impersonating officers from agencies like CBI and RBI to create fear and manipulate victims into transferring money.

Senior citizens and business owners are being targeted in particular, as they are more prone to comply under pressure.

Call to introduce linguistic anthropology in K'taka varsities

RASHMI PATIL @ Bengaluru

STATE Policy and Planning Commission member S Mohanadass Hegde has put forward a proposal to the government and the higher education department to introduce discipline-specific elective papers on linguistic anthropology for postgraduate students pursuing master's programmes in the subject and related humanities and social science disciplines.

Hegde said introducing linguistic anthropology would be relevant particularly for Karnataka, which is home to diverse linguistic communities, including tribals. "The course could encourage research on language preservation, cultural heritage and social change," he said.The proposal aims to strengthen interdisciplinary education and promote research on the relationship among language, culture and society.

Hegde said, "The initiative draws inspiration from recent academic developments at the University of Delhi, where the department of anthropology is planning to introduce a similar elective under its postgraduate curriculum framework. Following a comparable model, universities in Karnataka could introduce a four-credit elective paper on linguistic anthropology for second-year master's students."

He added, "Anthropology consists of four major branches – cultural anthropology, biological or physical anthropology, archaeological anthropology and linguistic anthropology. However, linguistic anthropology has historically received limited attention in many university curricula in India. Introducing this subject would help address this gap while strengthening the understanding of language as a key component of culture and social organisation."

Professor Dominic Davidappa, who is attached to the Kannada department at Bangalore University's Jnanabharti campus, said, "Introducing linguistics anthropology will be a good move. Irrespective of the choice of subject among students, they must know and understand the science behind languages. An intense research is going on in Gulbarga University about the language of the Koraga community. Linguistic Anthropology will encourage such research work in the universities."

Professor Dattareya M of the English department in Kuvempu University said, "It will be a good move to introduce this department, as it is an interdisciplinary subject. However, there must be competent professors to teach the subject. There is a crisis in the higher education sector as there has not been any recruitment for years."

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform General Public, my Client **Mr. SHANKARLAL AGARWAL,** aged about 76 years, S/o Bilasrai Agarwal, residing at No.103, Adarsh Palace, 47th Cross, Jayanagar 5th Block, Bangalore - 560041, **Aadhaar No. 2368 3171 5505.**

My client Mr.**SHANKARLAL AGARWAL is the** owner of Survey No. 5/1 and 6/3 in Bilekahalli Village, Begur Hobli Bangalore South Taluk, related original Sale Deeds documents lost Viz : 1) 16207/88-89, dated 7.3.89 2) 16208/88-89, dated 7.3.89 3) 6251/89-90, dated 9.12.89, 4) 1745/ 90-91, dated 27.9.90 5) 16206/ 88-89, dated 7.3.89, 6) 6252/89-90, dated 9.12.89 7)6227/ 89-90, dated 9.12.89, 8) 7453/89-90 dated 30.3.90 9) 1072/90-91, dated 3.7.90, 10) 1274/91-92, dated 29.6.91 11) 1273/91-92, dated 29.6.91, all sale deeds registered in the office of the Sub Registrar, Bommanahalli, Bangalore South Taluk and Gift Deed Registered Document No. JAY-1-01705/11-12, C.D. NO. JAYD134, registered in the office of the Sub Registrar, Jayanagar, Bangalore, the said **Sale Deeds and Gift Deed** are misplaced / lost while shifting residence within the limits of J.P. Nagar Police Station, Bangalore even after thorough search he was not able to locate the same. In this behalf he has lodged online police complaint vide Serial No.2117812 Lost Report No. 2117812/2026 dated 20-03-2026 as such through this Public Notice he has confirmed that the above said original **Sale Deeds and Gift Deed** documents Deed has been lost.

If anybody finds / traces the said original documents, it is requested to contact and handover to the under signed immediately.

SHIVANNA, Advocate
No.28 12th Main Road, 4th Block East, Jayanagar, (Near Sub-Registrar Office), BANGALORE-560011. Ph: (M) 9901507257
Bangalore, Date : 20-03-2026

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POSSESSION NOTICE

(Rule 8(1) Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)
[Rule - 8 (1)]

1. Borrower/ Mortgagor : Mr. Srinivasa Vadivelu Address (1) : No 20, 2nd Floor, 4th Floor, Akshaya Nagar 2nd Block, T C Palya Main Road Bangalore 560032
Address (2) : Vijayashree Nilaya, 2nd Cross Nruptunga Nagar Hosamane, Bhadravathi Shimoga Karnataka 577301
Address (3) : Site No. 269, 5th Main Road, Yodhya Road Srinivasa Nagar, Kithiganur Village Near Sri Srinivasa Temple Bidrahalli Hobli Bangalore 560049
2. Co-Applicant: Mr. V S Jayalakshmi,
Address (1) : No 20, 2nd Floor, 4th Floor, Akshaya Nagar 2nd Block, T C Palya Main Road Bangalore 560032
Address (2) : Vijayashree Nilaya, 2nd Cross Nruptunga Nagar Hosamane, Bhadravathi Shimoga Karnataka 577301
Address (3) : Site No. 269, 5th Main Road, Yodhya Road Srinivasa Nagar, Kithiganur Village Near Sri Srinivasa Temple Bidrahalli Hobli Bangalore 560049

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Union Bank of India, K R Puram Branch under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement Security Interest (Second) Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated **26.11.2025** calling upon the above said borrower/s to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 28,20,101.70** (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakhs Twenty Thousand One Hundred One & paise Seventy Only) as on 26.11.2026 with interest and other applicable charges from time to time as per the agreement within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules on this **18th day of March 2026.**

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Union Bank of India, Ulsoor Road branch, for an amount **Rs.28,20,101.70** (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakhs Twenty Thousand One Hundred One & paise Seventy Only) and interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of the time available to the borrower to redeem the secured assets.

Description of Immovable Property

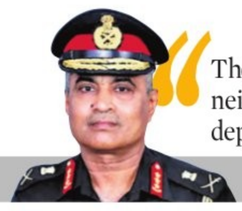
All that piece and parcel of Property bearing Northern portion of Site No. 269, Old House List Khata No. 398/A/81, New Khata No. 3100, situated at Kithiganur Village , Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore and measuring East to West: 30 Feet and North to South : 20 Feet in all measuring 600 Sqft and bounded as follows: East by : Site No. 270,West by : Road, North by : Road, South by : Remaining Southern Portion of same Site No. 269.

Date: 18.03.2026
Place: Bangalore

Sd/-
Authorised Officer
Union Bank of India

QuoteExpress **IT ALWAYS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT'S DONE** › NELSON MANDELA

EDITORIAL



"The security of the nation can neither be outsourced nor be dependent on the largesse of others" — General Manoj Pande

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Ramnath Goenka

WAR-DRIVEN OIL HITS ₹, ANY FURTHER SLIDE RISKS ECONOMY FEELING STRAIN

THE Indian rupee's slide since the Iran conflict, set off by the larger US-Israel war in West Asia, shows pressure across Asian currencies rather than just a domestic problem. Last Friday, the rupee crossed ₹93 per dollar for the first time, moved close to ₹94, and saw its steepest drop in four years. It has declined nearly 2 percent this month since hostilities escalated on March 2, driven by a combination of surging crude oil prices, global risk aversion, sustained foreign portfolio outflows and a firm US dollar.

The pressures are not unique to India. Across Asia, currencies such as the Japanese yen, South Korean won, Indonesian rupiah, Malaysian ringgit, Philippine peso and Thai baht have all fallen against the dollar, reflecting the region-wide impact of higher oil prices and global uncertainty. A stronger dollar index has added to the pressure, while foreign investors have withdrawn over $8 billion in March alone, the biggest outflow since January 2025. Most countries have responded by allowing their currencies to weaken in a controlled way, tightening liquidity when needed and using reserves to manage sharp swings rather than fixing a set level.

In India's case, the rupee's weakness is amplified by its dependence on imported crude. Brent prices have risen about 40 percent since March 2, sharply widening the current account deficit and increasing the import bill. Earlier trends show that when oil prices remain between $90 and $110 per barrel, the rupee tends to drop by around 6.5 to 7.5 percent, indicating further downside risk if prices stay high. Ongoing capital outflows have added to the pressure. The RBI has reportedly spent around $15 billion this month to reduce volatility, rather than trying to hold the rupee at a fixed level. This helps conserve reserves while also showing that it will act to prevent excessive swings in the currency.

For now, the rupee is likely to stay in a weaker range of ₹93-95, with the possibility of moving closer to ₹100 if oil prices stay high and capital outflows persist. In this way, the rupee is tracking the wider trend across Asia, where global shocks, more than domestic factors alone, are driving currency movements. As it is, the rupee ended 2025 as Asia's worst-performing currency amid trade-war uncertainties and foreign capital outflows; any further depreciation will be devastating for the economy.

SAFETY SIGNALS MATTER AS SEMAGLUTIDE SCALES

THE global weight-loss treatment market has not had it so good in ages. From a 'class' drug priced at a prohibitive ₹10,000 a month and above, the jab's cost dropped by as much as 70-90 percent in a day, potentially making it massy. It all happened on March 21, a day after Danish pharma major Novo Nordisk's patent protection for its blockbuster diabetes and weight-loss drug, Semaglutide, expired in India. The domestic industry, which specialises in low-cost knock-offs, populated the market quickly with its generic variants. Initially marketed by innovator Nordisk as an active pharma ingredient for managing Type 2 diabetes, Semaglutide later became popular as a tool to control obesity. For example, Semaglutide is the core ingredient in Ozempic, one of Nordisk's flagship products for diabetes. It costs between ₹8,800 and ₹11,175 a month, while Nordisk's weight-loss Wegovy is available for ₹10,850-16,400 a month. In contrast, Indian generic variants are enticingly priced between ₹1,300 and ₹4,000 a month. At least 40 Indian firms are expected to flood global markets with their generics, vying for a slice of the aspirational, affordable drug market.

The domestic demand could be huge: a 2025 study estimated 101 million Indians with Type 2 diabetes and 136 million with pre-diabetes. Add the global obesity epidemic, and the potential market is enormous. Known as the pharma capital of the world, India accounts for around 20 percent of the global generic sector.

Yet, Semaglutide is not a simple 'lifestyle' booster. It is a prescription drug that mimics the hormone GLP-1, regulating appetite and blood sugar. It has documented side effects, including nausea, diarrhoea, constipation and abdominal pain. Cheap and widespread access, in the absence of proper medical guidance and monitoring, could lead to misuse or over-reliance, especially among people looking for quick fixes instead of lasting health improvements. It should not be sold as an over-the-counter drug; rather, a comprehensive patient guidance programme highlighting its side effects, with support every step of the way through the treatment period, is how it ought to be administered. On a lighter note, Air India's cabin crew, recently ordered to shape up or ship out, could queue up for the generic jab. But expecting policemen with a rounded midsection to follow suit might be too optimistic.

The war reshapes the Gulf, exposing the failure of outsourced security and forcing states to rethink dependence on American power, as risks to energy, connectivity and regional stability intensify sharply

THE GULF AND ILLUSION OF ITS PROXY SECURITY

AMITABH MATTOO
Dean, School of International Studies, JNU; former member, National Security Advisory Board

SOURAV ROY

THE Gulf is unlikely to ever be the same again. Not after this war is over. This shallow, roughly 1,000-kilometre-long semi-enclosed sea in West Asia is being redefined in a manner unimaginable since US President Jimmy Carter articulated a doctrine in 1980 that placed the Gulf at the centre of American strategic interests.

As we long learnt as students of international relations, the so-called stability of the Persian Gulf rested on a fundamental assumption: that American power could underwrite regional stability without fundamentally destabilising it. This was the logic of what might be called 'outsourced security'—a system in which local regimes ceded strategic autonomy in exchange for protection. The US-Israel war on Iran has now exposed a central paradox of contemporary geopolitics: in an era of precision warfare and asymmetric retaliation, proximity to a hegemonic superpower does not guarantee security. It can generate exposure and intensify vulnerabilities. The Gulf states find themselves at the centre of this contradiction. What the ongoing war has done is expose the promise of American security guarantees for what they always were: contingent, transactional and ultimately indifferent to the vulnerabilities they created. The Gulf states are not the central actors of this war. But they are its most consequential geography: economically, strategically and politically.

The Gulf is often treated as a monolithic strategic bloc. It is not.

Saudi Arabia has long viewed Iran as its principal rival. Yet, it also understands the risks of systemic collapse across the Gulf. The prospect of regime change in Tehran does not promise stability; it raises the specter of fragmentation. The memory of the Abqaiq attacks in 2019 continues to shape Saudi risk assessments: those strikes temporarily knocked out 5.7 million barrels a day of Saudi output or more than 5 percent of global oil supply. Vulnerability cannot be entirely mitigated, only managed. That lesson was not lost on the generation of technocrats now running Vision 2030—no sovereign wealth fund survives a regional conflagration.

The United Arab Emirates and Qatar present a different face of the same fragility. Dubai, emblematic of globalised urbanism, was designed as a node of flows: capital, labour, logistics; a Singapore for the Arab world. But flows reverse under conditions of risk. With expatriates accounting for roughly 88 percent of residents, the UAE's success depends on perception, and war alters perception with an efficiency that no marketing budget can counter. Dubai's dream of replacing Singapore as the destination for expats is on the verge of vapourising.

Qatar's position is even more complex. As host to major US military installations and a long-standing interlocutor with Iran, Doha has cultivated calibrated engagement as a substitute for strategic depth; it has hosted quiet dialogue, including that between the Taliban and Western world. But mediation requires space, and war compresses it. As aviation routes are disrupted and energy infrastructure is targeted, Qatar's role as a connector state is under intense pressure. In Bahrain, external vulnerability intersects with internal fragility in ways that neither the ruling family nor its Saudi patrons can fully manage. Meanwhile, Oman and Kuwait persist in ambiguity; Oman's long-standing role as a diplomatic intermediary reflects not idealism, but a hard-won realism about the limits of alignment.

At the heart of this crisis lies, as we know, a fundamental paradox and structural irony that the Gulf's rulers have long understood but preferred not to articulate: the arrangements built to deter attack have become the very reason to mount one. The bases that reassure them also make them targets. The weapons purchases that signal commitment also signal targeting coordinates. The Gulf states invested heavily in American security guarantees—and those guarantees are now part of what makes them exposed.

The Gulf's model of development has been built on the assumption that economic interdependence mitigates geopolitical risk. That assumption is increasingly difficult to sustain. Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz—through which a critical share of global energy transits—have immediate systemic consequences. In 2024, the strait carried around 20 million barrels of oil a day and about one-fifth of global LNG trade. Aviation hubs in Doha and Dubai, central to global connectivity, are exposed. The damage to civilian infrastructure across the Gulf, and above all the disproportionate burden borne by the region's migrant workers, will mark a moment of reckoning.

It would be premature to speak of an American withdrawal from the Gulf. The United States remains the region's predominant external power. But credibility is a function of assurances being met. If security guarantees are seen as failing, then they will be articulated through new hedging strategies, alternative partnerships and independent decisions made without Washington's prior knowledge.

What may therefore emerge is not total rupture, but recalibration: a Gulf more inclined toward strategic diversification, greater autonomy and a more transactional approach to external partnerships—one in which American power remains relevant but is no longer assumed.

For countries like India, the stakes are immediate. The Gulf is an extension of India's economic and strategic space—a source of energy, remittances and connectivity that no easy redirection can quickly replace. New Delhi's policy must therefore be guided by patience and prudence: support de-escalation, preserve engagement across divides and resist even *de facto* incorporation into a conflict that destabilises its extended neighbourhood. The channels of communication with Tehran must be particularly maintained.

What this war has revealed is not simply the fragility of a region, but the exhaustion of a system—one that sustained itself for fifty years on the willingness of local actors to trade sovereignty for security, and on the American willingness to provide security without accountability. Both conditions are now in doubt. What replaces them will be improvised, contested and imperfect. But it will not look like what came before.

The era of outsourced security is ending. The era of its consequences has only just begun. It is important that India craft its policies on the basis of long-term interests rather than any cosy arrangements crafted with the despotic dictators of the region.

(Views are personal)

THE MEASURE OF FAITH

RENUKA NARAYANAN
FAITHLINE

IT troubles me to see the hate spewed indiscriminately on all Jews everywhere. The targeted attacks on them painfully bring back memories of the Pahalgam massacre. I have never supported Hamas, which the Palestinians have kept in power since 2007, and fully collude with, as we saw on October 7. I was horrified by the widely reported views of a senior founding member of Hamas, Mahmoud al-Zahar, in 2023, that "Israel is only the first target. The entire planet will be under our law." He meant that the goal of Hamas was that Islam would rule the world, crushing other faiths. As an Indian, I cannot support those who hold such views. So, please understand, I am not against Muslims *en masse*, but against this stated goal of Hamas.

My experience with Jewish people has always been pleasant, right from childhood. My school in Bombay was run by a dashing Jewish lady, Sophie Kelly, and I recall seeing the palm hut for the Sukkot festival put up each year on her big balcony. I had Jewish classmates when I lived in Kochi, and my mother had Jewish friends. I was invited to Passover Seder in Delhi. I grew up admiring Jewish people for their brilliance and work ethic.

Despite endless persecution, they excelled in medicine, agriculture and technology, won more Nobels than most for advancing human knowledge and produced some of the most uplifting music the world has ever heard. Scholar David Shulman of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, pulled off a civilisational coup in 2016 with his book, *Tamil: A Biography*.

I greatly respect Jews for holding on to their faith through the most discouraging circumstances. Their god may seem stern to some, while I may have "too many graven images", as Roy, a Jewish doctor in London, half-seriously told me in 1997 over lunch. However, we both knew that three Jewish communities found a safe haven amid Hindu statuary, and the perception of India among Jews changed over time.

The first Jewish-Hindu summit was held in India in 2007. The second was in Jerusalem in 2008, resulting in a joint declaration by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, led by the Chief Rabbi, Shear Yeshuv Cohen and the Hindu Dharmacharya Sabha led by Swami Dayanand Saraswati: "The participants reaffirmed their commitment to deepening this bilateral relationship predicated on the recognition of One Supreme Being, Creator and Guide of the Cosmos; shared values and similar historical experiences".

Further, they "recognised that the One Supreme Being, both in its formless and manifest aspects, has been worshipped by Hindus over the millennia. This does not mean that Hindus worship 'gods' and 'idols'. The Hindu relates to only the One Supreme Being when he/she prays to a particular manifestation."

AFP

> Religious supremacism at the cost of hate-spewing and persecuting others is a vile and futile idea. Much can be learnt from the persistent spirit of the Jewish community. The first Jewish-Hindu summit, too, upheld a united commitment toward shared values and similar historical experiences

They noted, "The Swastika is an ancient and greatly auspicious symbol of the Hindu tradition. It is inscribed on Hindu temples, ritual altars, entrances and even account books. A distorted version of this sacred symbol was misappropriated by the Third Reich in Germany and abused as an emblem under which heinous crimes were perpetrated against humanity, particularly the Jewish people. The participants recognise that this symbol is, and has been sacred to Hindus for millennia, long before its misappropriation."

This changed perception came home to me when on a diplomatic assignment in Bangkok in 2009. The apartment across the landing from mine was leased to the Israeli embassy, then occupied by a young couple.

Our friendship began over the swastika. I had a painted clay one from a Delhi roadside potter that I wanted to hang outside my door. Then it struck me I had Jewish neighbours. Given the evil history of the distorted Nazi swastika, what would they feel each time they opened their door? What terrible pain about the Holocaust would come back? What if their own relatives had perished in it back then?

So, I rang their bell that evening, swastika in hand, and introduced myself as their new neighbour. They promptly invited me in, and I showed them the swastika. "It's an auspicious symbol for me since I'm Hindu, but I wanted to know if you'd mind," I said. "If you're not comfortable with it, I won't hang it outside." But they were perfectly sweet about it. "We know the real swastika. We'll tell our visitors, too," they assured me.

"I was posted in Delhi," disclosed the husband. "We enjoyed Indian food there," smiled the wife. "My favourite was raj kachori," added the husband, which set me laughing because it's as particular a North Indian snack as it can get. They insisted I stay for tea, and the next day, my little swastika hung cheerily outside my front door, a welcoming symbol of home. It gladdened my heart every day when I came back.

And so, we became good neighbours. They kindly invited me to dinner. Another time, their two small children, a girl and a boy, held my hands and took me on a tour of each floor in our building to see Halloween decorations. I was invited to events by the Israeli embassy and had a good time in bright, genial company.

When Diwali arrived, I was surprised to find a small parcel outside my door. It turned out to be Israeli halvah, a creamy log tasting of sesame. There was a card with it that said 'Happy Diwali'. I was touched that strangers from another faith had done this. They moved away, and we lost contact. But I hope and pray they are alive and well. There are times I loathe all religion for the misery it causes.

(Views are personal)
(shebaba09@gmail.com)

QUICK TAKE

A RITUAL OF LESS

DUSKING, or schemeren, a recently revived Dutch ritual, encourages people to go outside and quietly watch day turn into night. Its simplicity makes it special: no goals, just paying attention to the fading light. This practice is important because it pushes back against our need for constant brightness and stimulation. Japanese writer Jun'ichirō Tanizaki once warned that always chasing light makes us lose shadows and the subtle beauty they bring. Dusking helps us become more aware, showing us what we can notice when things get dim. In today's busy, noisy world, taking time to do nothing can feel refreshing—especially since it doesn't create anything. At least, not money, not muscle mass.

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Public tear

Ref: *Philosophers at the Strait* (Mar 22). The author raises a question that deserves wider attention. Habermas's idea of reasoned public dialogue feels increasingly distant in an era of algorithmic noise. But the question she ends with—how do we talk to each other globally?—is perhaps the most pressing.
Abbharna Barathi, email

War's ravages

Ref: *Tehran bleeds Gulf, not Israel* (Mar 22). Precious natural resources take millions of years to form. It's pathetic that humans are damaging them over irrational gains. What ideals are these global leaders trying to leave behind for the upcoming generations?
Ramala Kinnera, Hyderabad

Practice-oriented disciplines

Ref: *Measure impact* (Mar 20). This perspective is equally relevant across several other disciplines, particularly in the services sector. Fields such as public health, sociology, hospital management and policy would benefit immensely from research that prioritises applications, systems improvement and measurable outcomes. Many of these disciplines are inherently practice-oriented. Doctoral research could instead emphasise designing and testing interventions, improving service delivery, strengthening healthcare or developing scalable solutions to societal problems.
Ramya Pinnamaneni, Bhubaneshwar

Military might

Ref: *Ukraine drone scares* (Mar 22). Both Ukraine and Iran have turned out to be formidable war machines. Relying partly on imported technologies but mostly via homegrown efforts, they are showing how they can be relentless fighters, paving the contours of future wars. Ukraine perhaps had a decade and Iran a few more. No drum beats.
M Balakrishnan, Bengaluru

Mamata's governance

Ref: *TMC campaign* (Mar 22). As Mamata Banerjee seeks another term, incidents like the RG Kar rape and murder and the latest lift-entrapment death challenge claims of effective governance. They cannot be dismissed as isolated failures.
A P Thiruvadi, Chennai

Impractical ultimatum

Ref: *Lose weight or be grounded* (Mar 22). The instruction is a welcome step since it's in accordance with the management policy in aviation. However, the time-bound ultimatum is too short to correct 'mistakes'.
P G Moorthy, Thiruvananthapuram

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POSTS OF THE DAY

Akhilesh Yadav @yadavakhilesh

Through the "Malti Devi–Murti Devi Women's Honour Ceremony," we have sought to recognise and encourage women whose efforts reflect the spirit of womanhood.

Tejashwi Yadav @yadavtejashwi

Bihar Day greetings to all Biharis and fellow countrymen! Bihar has a cultural heritage and glorious history! Bihar holds the hope of progress for all!

Shivraj Singh Chouhan @ChouhanShivraj

As part of the pledge to plant trees every day, I planted a sapling today at Smart City Park in Bhopal along with brothers, sisters, and nephews and nieces.

Modi gets title of longest serving government head

Has completed 8,931 days as Prime Minister, Gujarat chief minister

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday became the longest-serving head of an elected government in India. He completed 8,931 days in office as head of government, combining his terms as Gujarat Chief Minister and Prime Minister, surpassing former Sikkim CM Pawan Kumar Chamling.

Assuming the office as Gujarat CM on October 7, 2001, Modi remained in his post until May 21, 2014. He was later sworn in as the PM on May 26, 2014. Since then, he has led the NDA government through three consecutive Lok Sabha mandates in 2014, 2019, and 2024, entering his 25th year in executive office.

Union ministers and BJP leaders complimented the Prime Minister for setting the record, saying this reflects his deep commitment to nation-first governance, giving rights to the poor and enhancing the country's pride on global platforms. Describing the accomplishment as a "milestone" built on service, hard work and unwavering commitment, Union Home Minster Amit Shah said Narendra Modi setting a record of 8,931 days in public life reflects "a deep dedication to nation-first governance, integrity in action, and tireless service to every citizen."

Modi's decades of Seva have shaped an era of his own. Whether it is giving the poor their rights, setting new landmarks in development or enhancing the nation's pride on global platforms, the Modi era has transformed India unrecognisably —Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

"Modi's decades of Seva have shaped an era of his own. Whether it is giving the poor their rights, setting new landmarks in development or enhancing the nation's pride on global platforms, the Modi era has transformed India unrecognisably," said Shah, who has worked closely with Modi from his tenure in Gujarat. "Serving the nation and its people without taking a holiday for more than 24 years is the manifestation of his sheer commitment. This explains the unprecedented affection he received from people, three times as the Gujarat CM and three times as India's PM. People's trust, affection and support for him have only grown with every passing day," Shah said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Modi's life has been a continuous journey of service -- from his unwavering commitment as the Gujarat CM and his dedicated leadership as the PM.

Health Minister JP Nadda said Modi's years in government reflect his deep commitment to the country and a constant focus on serving the people. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw congratulated Modi with a picture of the PM on Chenab railway bridge holding the tricolour.

BJP president Nitin Nabin said during Modi's tenure as prime minister, the country has made rapid progress in infrastructure expansion, the digital revolution, effective public welfare schemes, and the direction of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat.'

Russia calls Ukraine 'instability exporter' over NIA detentions

SUMIT KUMAR SINGH @ New Delhi

RUSSIA strongly reacted against Volodymyr Zelenskyy government following India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) arresting six Ukrainian nationals and a US citizen at Indian airports. Moscow's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has called Kyiv a "core exporter of instability worldwide".

In an official statement, Zakharova said the reaction of the Ukrainian embassy in New Delhi was "quite revealing", accusing it of seeking to "conceal the incident and to keep its citizens' questionable activities, which were clearly designed to destabilise the situation in the region, under wraps." "The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry chose to remain silent on its citizens' violation of India's counter-terrorism legislation and wasted no time baselessly accusing 'certain Indian and Russian news agencies' of deliberately falsifying the facts," she said. "The incident clearly shows that Zelensky's neo-Nazi regime is a core exporter of instability worldwide."

Russia's reaction came a day after the Ukrainian Embassy in New Delhi flagged what it described as a possible Russian hand in the arrests, expressing "serious concern" over what it called the "orchestrated and politically motivated nature" of the case. "Taking into account publicly available information... including media reports indicating that the initiation of this proceeding was prompted by information provided by the Russian side, the Embassy of Ukraine expresses serious concern regarding the presence of circumstances that point to a possible orchestrated and politically motivated nature of this case," the Ukrainian mission said in a statement.

Russia's spokeswoman mounted an indictment of Western arms supplies to Ukraine, saying weapons supplied by NATO and EU were "inadequately accounted for and may surface anywhere".

Detained since March 13

On March 13, the NIA detained a US national — Matthew Aaron Van Dyke —at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata, and six Ukrainian nationals from airports in Lucknow and New Delhi

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry remained silent on its citizens' violation of India's counter-terrorism law

Mosow foreign ministry

INSIDER TRACK

Race for CBI chief post heats up

With CBI director Praveen Sood retiring in May, the government has begun the process of finding his successor. Sources say Sood is unlikely to get an extension. A panel of eligible IPS officers is being assembled. Rajasthan DGP Rajeev Sharma, CISF DG Praveer Ranjan, NCRB DG Alok Ranjan, and CRPF DG G P Singh are among the contenders. Sharma and Ranjan have prior CBI experience, while Alok Ranjan could receive a tenure extension if selected. The panel is being finalised, and a decision is expected in April. The government is aiming for continuity, experience, and familiarity with the agency in selecting the next head of India's premier investigative agency.

Next CDS likely from Navy

General Anil Chauhan will retire as Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on May 30 after an extension granted in September 2025. The government is looking for his successor. Several senior army officers are under consideration, but there is a growing belief that the next CDS may come from the Navy. Lieutenant General A K Singh is also seen as a strong contender. Chauhan handled major operations, including Operation Sindoor, with efficiency, raising expectations for his successor. A final decision is expected in April. The choice will influence India's military leadership, as the CDS coordinates the three services and guides strategic planning and defence modernisation.

Fair price dealers in a big dilemma

The All-India Fair Price Shop Dealers' Federation has demanded higher commissions, compensation for grain handling losses, and direct transfers of additional funds from state governments. They had planned a rally in Delhi with 5.5 lakh members on April 8 at Talkatora Stadium, but the government's proposal to introduce a coupon system threatens to lead to shop closures. The Congress lobby within the federation wants Rahul Gandhi to raise their concerns. Upon learning of this, Consumer Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi quickly offered to address their demands. The federation is now in a bind: who should address their members at Talkatora?

Dual police heads vacancy looms

With NCRB DG Alok Ranjan retiring in June, both the Bureau of Police Research and Development and NCRB may soon be without full-time heads. Ranjan has been holding a dual charge after Rajeev Sharma returned to Rajasthan as DGP, leaving BPR&D vacant. Eligible IPS officers are reportedly avoiding these postings, making the situation unusual. BPR&D shapes police reforms, while NCRB manages national crime data, underscoring the importance of leadership. For six months, Ranjan managed both posts, but normally, separate heads are appointed. The Home Ministry now faces the challenge of filling these key positions quickly to ensure effective functioning.

Govt asks CWC to advise on continuous Chambal flows to protect dolphins

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

THE Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has instructed the Central Water Commission (CWC) to provide recommendations on how to sustain environmental flows in the Chambal River during the lean season, ensuring that conservation efforts related to the Ganges River dolphin are not adversely affected.

Concerns arose following the initiation of a series of dam constructions under the East Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) over the tributaries of the Chambal River, including the Banas, Kuno, Parbati, and Kalisindh rivers in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Moreover, no environmental impact assessment has been conducted to evaluate how the project will affect dolphin conservation and potentially affect other aquatic life.

A senior officer stated, "The project will draw water from the tributaries of the Chambal River, threatening its environmental flows." Furthermore, evaporation during the summer months is expected to result in additional water loss.

According to a study by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), dolphins require a minimum depth of three metres in flowing rivers to survive during lean seasons. The officer emphasised, "So far, no environmental assessment has been done to determine how these projects will impact dolphins, gharials, and other aquatic species."

The WII study highlighted that the decreasing flow of the Chambal River has been affecting dolphin movement. During the lean season, dolphins tend to concentrate in the deeper pools of the river.

Field data analysed

The WII's study analysed field data on the distribution of Ganges River dolphins, gharials (crocodilian species with long, thin snouts), and other important aquatic life, including turtles. It also assessed water depth, water quality, and seasonal river flow patterns, along with 10-day flow data from CWC

Terrorist attacks and deaths in India see big drop in 2025

JAVARIA RANA @ New Delhi

PAKISTAN has dethroned Burkina Faso as the world's most terrorism-affected country in the latest Global Terrorism Index, while India saw a decline in both terror-related deaths and attacks, the Institute for Economics and Peace said.

Pakistan recorded 1,139 terrorism-related deaths and 1,045 incidents last year, marking a sixth straight year of rising fatalities. The 2026 assessment links the deterioration to the resurgence of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and worsening instability along the Afghanistan border, adding that the Taliban's return to power in 2021 "provided the TTP with the means and motivation to significantly expand their geographic reach and operational efficiency."

Of the four deadliest terrorist organisations tracked globally, the TTP was the only one to record an increase in deaths in 2025. Violence remained concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, which accounted for most of Pakistan's fatalities. Hostage-taking also rose sharply, driven in part by the Balochistan Liberation Army's hijacking of the Jaffar Express in March last year, during which 442 people were taken captive.

TRENDS CHANGE

1. Pakistan recorded 1,139 terrorism-related deaths and 1,045 incidents last year
2. Globally, terrorism trends improved, with deaths falling 28% to 5,582
3. As many as 81 countries improved, while only 19 deteriorated

The Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands remain a persistent flashpoint, with cross-border militant activity driving tensions between the two countries. This escalated into open conflict earlier this year, when Pakistan launched airstrikes on Kabul and Kandahar, accusing Afghan territory of sheltering Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan fighters.

The report warns such developments could "displace populations, weaken border controls and create the security vacuums in which groups such as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Islamic State Khorasan Province have historically thrived."

India ranked 13th, moving up one place from the previous year. Terrorism-related deaths declined and the country accounted for 2% of the total global fatalities. Terrorist attacks also fell by 43%.

Globally, terrorism trends improved sharply, with deaths falling 28% to 5,582 and incidents dropping nearly 22% to 2,944. As many as 81 countries improved, while only 19 deteriorated, the lowest since the index began. However, the report warns that "a rise in terrorism is likely."

EXPRESS READ

Furnish updated info on prisons: SC to states

The Supreme Court has directed all the states and Union territories to furnish updated details relating to jails, including the sanctioned capacity of each prison and steps taken to check overcrowding, by May 18. The bench also asked the states and UTs to provide details about the number of women's prisons within their jurisdictions and the facilities available in them.

House panel seeks Lokpal inquiry details

A Parliamentary Committee has sought details of what all is being done to operationalise the inquiry and prosecution wings of the Lokpal, over a decade after a law governing it was enacted. The law governing the anti-corruption ombudsman came into force on January 1, 2014. However, it began functioning only on March 27, 2019, after its members were appointed.

Extreme weather conditions causing preterm births in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

EXTREME temperatures in the Indo-Gangetic plains (IGP) of India —either too cold or hot— and hazardous pollution are linked to an increase in preterm births, a leading cause of neonatal mortality and associated with long-term physical, neurodevelopmental & socioeconomic effects, a study said.

Noting that, despite recent improvements, India continues to record preterm births— when babies are born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed—at a considerable frequency, especially in the Indo-Gangetic plains, in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, which exhibit high climate vulnerability.

Published in the journal BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, the study warned that the changing climate is likely to lead to more extreme heat in summers and more intense pollution in winters in densely populated basins like the IGP, which threatens to largely reverse the recent progress made in the field of maternal and child health by India.

In 2020, an estimated 13.4 million babies were born preterm globally. With the prevalence of 9.9% preterm births among all births, India alone accounted for 3.02 million preterm births— over 20% of the global total.

Alarmingly, the vulnerability to extreme temperatures is more pronounced among low-income populations, the study said. India, the sixth-most-affected country globally by extreme weather, has nine states among the top 50 most climate-vulnerable regions.

Speaking with this paper, Dr Ambarish Dutta, the senior author of the study, and Professor, Epidemiology, Indian Institute of Public Health, Bhubaneswar, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), said, "Our current study results show that pregnancy outcomes of women living in middle and lower Indo-Gangetic plains of India, comprising UP, Bihar and Gangetic West Bengal, are significantly determined by their exposure to atmospheric temperature during pregnancy."

Dr Dutta said their study showed that among pregnant women who were exposed to the highest 20% average temperature during their entire pregnancy as compared to the middle 20% carried an additional risk of 126% to deliver preterm babies. The consequences of preterm birth include cognitive and developmental delays, impaired motor skills and long-term neurological & behavioural problems.

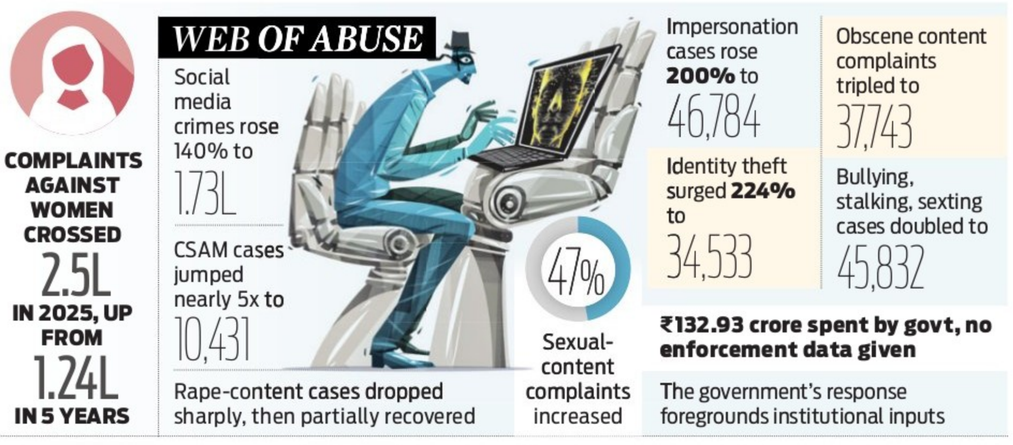
Cybercrimes against women go up in 5 years

VISMAY BASU @ New Delhi

CYBERCRIME complaints against women have nearly doubled in five years, crossing 2.5 lakh in 2025. Data presented by the Ministry of Home Affairs in response to a Rajya Sabha question asked by Kanimozhi Somu shows that online and social media crimes —covering cyberstalking, impersonation, identity theft, and harassment—surged 140%, from 72,301 complaints in 2021 to 1,73,766 in 2025.

Sexual-content-related categories rose 47% over the same period. Taken together, complaints have gone from 1,24,349 to 2,50,423 — effectively doubling within five years.

Within these numbers, child sexual abuse material (CSAM) complaints rose nearly fivefold, from 2,109 in 2021 to 10,431 in 2025. Fake profile and impersonation cases are up nearly 200%, reaching 46,784. Sexually obscene content complaints more than tripled to 37,743. Identity theft jumped 224%, climbing to 34,533 cases. Cyberbullying, stalking, and sexting complaints doubled to 45,832. The sharp rise across these categories points to the growing exploitation of social media ecosystems — platforms where fake identities can be constructed quickly, harmful content circulates at scale, and victims often have limited recourse.


COMPLAINTS AGAINST WOMEN CROSSED
2.5L
IN 2025, UP FROM
1.24L
IN 5 YEARS
WEB OF ABUSE
Social media crimes rose 140% to 1.73L
CSAM cases jumped nearly 5x to 10,431
Rape-content cases dropped sharply, then partially recovered
47%
Sexual-content complaints increased
Impersonation cases rose 200% to 46,784
Identity theft surged 224% to 34,533
Obscene content complaints tripled to 37,743
Bullying, stalking, sexting cases doubled to 45,832
₹132.93 crore spent by govt, no enforcement data given
The government's response foregrounds institutional inputs

A notable anomaly cuts through this otherwise upward trend: rape-content complaints collapsed from 30,574 in 2022 to 4,261 in 2024 before partially recovering to 8,780 in 2025 — suggesting reclassification of offences rather than a genuine decline. A broad dip across all categories in 2023, followed by a sharp rebound, raises further questions about consistency in reporting or data categorisation.

The government's response foregrounds institutional inputs: ₹132.93 crore allocated under the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) scheme, cyber forensic laboratories established in 33 states and union territories, and over 24,600 trained law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, and judicial officers.

The MP explicitly sought state-wise data on cases resolved, cases pending, and average resolution time. The government's reply addresses none of it — no FIR conversion rates, no prosecution data, no conviction figures. The absence of enforcement metrics is not a technicality.

VARSITY SYLLABUS

Universities should have a modern and scientific syllabus to address the needs of the world, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said on Saturday at Lok Bhavan in Mumbai.

3 KILLED | ONE HURT IN JAIPUR IN BUS-BIKE COLLISION

INDIA	Max	Min		Max	Min
Ahmedabad	36	23	Mumbai	32	26
Bhopal	37	21	Panaji	32	25
Jaipur	36	20	Patna	34	23
Amritsar	30	17	Lucknow	36	21
Chennai	34	26	Port Blair	31	26
Kolkata	35	25	Imphal	23	15
Srinagar	08	-2	Chandigarh	31	18

BJP woos tea trade families; Cong, Raijor Dal, AJP bank on leaders' charm ● Protests erupt in Bengal as workers agitate over nominations

It's tea garden vs Gogois in Assam

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

BJP is going to April 9 Assam elections with an increased focus on the Assamese heartland – Upper Assam. The region, comprising 27 of the state's 126 seats, will be key for the BJP as it eyes a third straight term, even as the Congress, weakened by defections of its leaders and defeats in the past decade, is pinning its hopes on a united Opposition.

In past elections, there has been a trend that whichever party or formation wins a maximum number of seats in Upper Assam goes on to form the government. The region had been a Congress bastion when the party under Tarun Gogoi ruled the state for three terms (2001-2016). The Congress' slide began after the BJP's emergence as a powerhouse. The BJP could make inroads into the tea-rich region, leading to its victories in 2016 and 2021.

The 27 seats in Upper Assam are spread across Golaghat, Jorhat, Majuli, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts. The population of migrant Muslims, who are called by the pejorative term "Miyas," is insignificant in the region.

Now what made the BJP increase its focus here? To understand this, one has to go back to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The BJP was sitting pretty with a solid support base. The 2024 Lok Sabha election results in Jorhat seat somewhat rejuvenated a moribund Congress when party leader Gaurav Gogoi managed to win, defeating student leader-turned-politician Topon Gogoi of the BJP. The BJP, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, went all guns blazing to defeat his bete noire Gogoi who is from the Ahom community.

The result set the alarm bells ringing for BJP. The Jorhat parliamentary seat has 10 Assembly constituencies falling under Jorhat, Majuli, Sivasagar and Charaideo districts. These seats, and others in Upper Assam, have a large number of Ahom and Adivasi (Tea Tribe) voters.

Amid a perception that they would be influenced by Gogoi's victory, the BJP started working actively in its bid to keep the people of the region in good humour. The government invested in tea gardens, focusing on land rights, welfare of tea community and infrastructure. For the first time in the 200-year history of Assam tea, the government decided to grant land pattas to tea workers. The government also decided to increase their daily wages by ₹30 from next April 1, constructed 100 new high schools in tea estates and offered one-time financial assistance of ₹5,000 under the Chief Minister's "Eti Koli Duti Paat" scheme.

The Charaideo Moidams (mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty) were included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. ST status has been a key demand for six communities, including Tea Tribe and Ahom. A group of ministers recommended ST status for them and sent its report to the Centre.

The Congress is hoping that Gogoi and his clean image will keep the party in good stead in the polls. In the recent past, the BJP, led by Sarma, made a vitriolic attack on the Congress MP over his Pakistan visit. The CM called Gogoi an agent of Pakistan's ISI. Later, Gogoi stated that the CM had no evidence.

Modi, Nabin to visit Bengal for poll preparation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP national president Nitin Nabin will soon visit poll-bound West Bengal to intensify campaigning ahead of the Assembly polls in 294 constituencies on April 23 and 29. The BJP has already announced candidates for 255 seats and is likely to release the names of the rest this week. Nabin is expected between March 24 and 26, coinciding with publication of the first supplementary voter list by the Election Commission of India. He will meet state leaders, including Suvendu Adhikari, to firm up strategy against the ruling Trinamool Congress led by CM Mamata Banerjee. Senior BJP leaders, including Modi and Amit Shah, will campaign after Ram Navami, with rallies and road shows planned across the state.

BJP's choice of loyalists over locals brews dissent

SUBHENDU MAITI @ Kolkata

DISCONTENT among a section of West Bengal BJP workers intensified after the party leadership nominated candidates in several assembly constituencies, ignoring local aspirants and preferring new faces over old hands in many seats.

The mother of RG Kar Hospital rape-murder victim wants to contest as BJP candidate, saying the defeat of the TMC would bring justice to her daughter. Tumpa Koyal, who had emerged as the face of protest after the rape and murder of a college girl in North 24 Parganas district 13 years ago, has met state BJP chief Samik Bhattacharya seeking to join the party. A section of BJP workers has expressed displeasure over the development, saying old local leaders should be given priority in ticket distribution, party sources said.

Rinku Majumder, wife of former Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh, had submitted her bio-data to the state party office before the poll dates were announced, seeking nomination either from Rajarhat-New Town or Bijpur constituency in North 24 Parganas. She vented her ire on the BJP leadership after not finding her name. Peeyush Kanoria has been fielded from Rajarhat-New Town. "The candidate fielded from Rajarhat-New Town is not a proper choice," Rinku told the media.

On Thursday, BJP workers demanded that Beleghata candidate Partha Choudhury be replaced with someone from the old guard. Some workers staged protests, claiming that the selection would help the TMC win. Samik Bhattacharya, however, made it clear that the decision was final once a candidate was declared.

The agitation was not restricted to the state headquarters. After the second list was announced, protests were reported from many districts.

Party-hopping MLA in TMC with 'a heavy heart'

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

POLITICS has been less about ideology and more about staying relevant for motormouth Assam MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed. The former government officer-turned-politician will contest the April 9 elections as a candidate of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC).

Ahmed was first elected to the Assembly in 2011 when he had contested as a candidate of the minority-based All India United Democratic Front from Baghbar in lower Assam.

He was re-elected from this Muslim-majority constituency in 2016 and then in 2021 but as a Congress candidate on both occasions. In October 2021, the Congress suspended him for "repeatedly violating" party discipline, and he remained cornered in the party.

In February this year, he joined the Raijor Dal—a party that champions the cause of regionalism as well as Assamese nationalism—reportedly after being assured of an election ticket. However, his name did not figure in the two lists released by the party.

The Congress and the Assam Jatiya Parisha, which are two key components of the six-party Opposition front, allegedly opposed his nomination as a Raijor Dal candidate. The Raijor Dal is also a part of the Opposition front.

The exclusion made him approach the AITC. The Mamata Banerjee-led party fielded him from the Mandia seat in lower Assam's Barpeta district. "I am from Assam, but no party accepted me. I have joined the AITC with a heavy heart," Ahmed said. His political career has been eventful, marked by controversies.

DEHRADUN DIARY

NARENDRA SETHI

Our correspondent in Uttarakhand

narendrasethi@newindianexpress.com

Governor's dialogue with experts on West Asia

Governor Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retd.) hosted a select group of maritime and strategic experts at the Raj Bhawan on Sunday for a nuanced discussion on the escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia. The dialogue centred on India's balanced and peaceful strategic posture, with the governor emphasising New Delhi's unwavering commitment to global stability and cooperation. The gathering underscored the critical need for coordinated efforts in enhancing maritime security and safeguarding national interests. Acknowledging the depth of the insights shared, the governor noted that such expert consultations remain vital.

Garima clinches Gold in discus, silver in javelin

Uttarakhand's para-athlete Garima Joshi continues her stellar trajectory. Competing at the 24th National Para Athletics Championship in Bhubaneswar (March 19-21, 2026), the powerhouse athlete dominated the F-55 category, clinching gold in discus and silver in javelin. Amidst a competitive field of 1,400 athletes, Garima stood out, contributing to Uttarakhand's nine-medal haul. This triumph follows her recent success at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix in Delhi, where she secured gold in discus and silver in shot put and javelin. With medals presented by Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at the closing ceremony, Garima is cementing her status.

Dehradun woman unites faiths through festivals

In an era of deepening communal divides, Kavita Khan offers a refreshing counter-narrative from Dehradun. A resident of Sahastradhara Road, Kavita, who married social worker Arif Khan in 2005, seamlessly integrates diverse traditions in her household—where Eid celebrations coexist with the glow of Diwali diyas and Holi colours. Kavita believes religion's true essence is unity, not boundaries. This philosophy spurred her social activism; in 2013, she launched 'Apni Pathshala' to educate slum children. Growing from a home-based initiative to a regular classroom, her impact expanded in 2016 with 'Project Muskan'.

ULFA attacks police camp, four injured

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guwahati

THE Paresh Baruah faction of insurgent group United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent (ULFA-Independent) attacked an Assam Police commando camp, leaving at least four personnel injured.

The incident occurred at Jagun in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district in the wee hours of Sunday. According to reports, the rebels fired multiple grenades, followed by indiscriminate fire and police retaliated.

Of the four injured, three sustained grievous injuries and were rushed to a hospital. Security forces launched an operation in search of the attackers.

Claiming responsibility for the attack, the ULFA-Independent stated that after the 2021 Assembly polls, it had decided against armed activities against the police. However, the outfit added, security forces killed several of its members.

Dhami keeps major depts in Cabinet reshuffle, new ministers too rewarded

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

UTTARAKHAND CM Pushkar Singh Dhami on Sunday finalised the portfolio allocation following the recent expansion of his cabinet. The reshuffle, which follows the induction of five new ministers, signals a calculated attempt to tighten the grip on governance.

While the new ministers have been assigned key portfolios, the CM has retained control over several critical departments, including Home, Personnel, Energy, Mining and Information and Public Relations. By keeping these vital sectors under his direct supervision, Dhami has effectively centralised core governance functions.

Dr Dhan Singh Rawat, previously handling the prominent health and medical education portfolios, has been relieved of these duties, which have now been handed to Subodh Uniyal.

Similarly, Ganesh Joshi has been stripped of the Rural Development portfolio, which has been reassigned to newly inducted cabinet minister Bharat Singh Chaudhary.

Among the new entrants, filling three previosuly vacant portfolios, Bhimtal MLA Ram Singh Kaira has been entrusted with the crucial urban development portfolio. Meanwhile, Madan Kaushik has been allocated Panchayati Raj, AYUSH Education, and Disaster Management.

Meanwhile, Khajan Das has been given charge of social welfare and minority welfare, and Pradeep Batra has been althe responsibility of the roadways (transport) department.

RSS asks Yogi MLAs not to dissent with govt in public

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

WITH the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections inching closer, the RSS, ideological fountainhead of the ruling BJP, has started cautioning the ministers of the Yogi cabinet and party MLAs to improve their working style and avoid making controversial statements against the state government.

The RSS advice to BJP lawmakers came at a meeting held at the residence of CM Adityanath Yogi, according to sources privy to the meeting. "The discussions among the RSS functionaries and state BJP leadership focused on addressing the alleged discontent among party workers ahead of 2027 elections," a source said.

During the last two months, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat held a series of meetings of the 'prants' in UP. Yogi also held provincial meetings with the Sangh across the state.

'Controversial statements reflect conflict in govt'

RSS functionaries said the controversial statements reflect a conflict in the government or a difference of opinion between the government and the Sangh. There was unanimity on showing unity among RSS and the government.

In the meeting, BJP office-bearers from the Awadh, Kashi, Braj, Kanpur, Goraksh, and western provinces of the RSS presented their views. It came to light that some ministers and BJP MLAs did not have coordination with the allies. The sources said the controversial statements often made by the BJP MLAs were discussed.

In the meeting, RSS functionaries said the controversial statements reflect a conflict in the government or a difference of opinion between the government and the Sangh. There was unanimity on showing unity among the RSS, state government, and the BJP before the elections. Practices like 'love jihad' and forced conversions, and keeping a special vigil on districts bordering Nepal also came up during the meeting.

The sources claimed that the RSS functionaries emphasised making nationalism an issue instead of caste in UP, keeping elections in mind. "Ministers and MLAs should not speak on caste issues. They should only talk about issues related to nationalism," a source said.

Over 9,800 athletes run in Bastar full marathon

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

THE 'Bastar Heritage Marathon 2026' saw an unprecedented surge of public enthusiasm with over 9,800 registered runners. More than just a sporting event, the 42 km full marathon emerged as a symbol of Bastar's changing face, growing peace, and the success of the government's rehabilitation policies, such as 'Poona Margham' (Rehabilitation to Rejuvenation) of Maoist rebels.

The marathon commenced from Lalbag in Jagdalpur (district headquarter of Bastar) and concluded near the majestic Chitrakote Waterfalls.

To encourage sporting talent, the administration announced a total prize pool of ₹25 lakh. A special 'Bastar Category' was introduced to allow local runners to compete alongside international-level athletes, with registration kept entirely free for residents of the Bastar district.

A standout feature of the marathon was the enthusiastic participation of the Manjhi-Chalki community, further strengthening the social fabric of the event. By showcasing the region's rich culture and newfound stability, the marathon has effectively projected a positive image of the region.

Running from Lalbagh to Chitrakote Waterfalls

The marathon commenced from Lalbag in Jagdalpur and concluded near the majestic Chitrakote Waterfalls. The administration announced a total prize pool of ₹25 lakh. A special 'Bastar Category' was introduced to allow local runners to compete alongside international-level athletes, with registration kept free for residents of Bastar.

The route offers participants a journey through Bastar's lush valleys, providing a unique encounter with the region's raw natural beauty and deep-rooted cultural identity.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed the event as a proud moment for Chhattisgarh, asserting that the marathon transcends traditional sports.

"Bastar Heritage Marathon is not just a competition, it is a celebration of our rich traditions, natural wealth, and public participation," CM said.

Under the theme 'Bastar Runs, Nation Unites', the event is stated to have not only promoted fitness but also solidified Bastar's place on the national and international tourism maps. The goal was also to create fresh opportunities for the local youth, generate employment, and accelerate development in the region.

The administration has prioritised runner safety and experience with comprehensive logistics along the scenic route with refreshment points, medical support, event perks,

This mega-event stands as a testament to the government's resolve to transform Bastar into a hub of peace, sports, and world-class tourism.

'Pilgrims' rush in first two months of Char Dham season impacts ecology'

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

A fresh analysis of the 2025 Char Dham Yatra has exposed critical vulnerabilities in the Himalayan pilgrimage circuit, revealing that a staggering 72% of annual footfall was crammed into the first 60 days of the season, putting immense pressure on fragile infrastructure.

The report, titled 'Pathways to Pilgrimage: Data Insights, Challenges and Opportunities', released by the Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation in Dehradun, highlights a severe imbalance in visitor distribution that threatens both pilgrim safety and environmental stability.

According to the study, which analyzed data over a 210-day period, the Yatra saw a total of 51,06,346 pilgrims in 2025—a 6.4% increase over 2024, though still lower than the record-breaking 56.16 lakh in 2023.

The government must look beyond the optics of record numbers and prioritize the carrying capacity of these routes, passenger safety, and data-driven management

Anoop Nautiyal, Founder of SDC Foundation

According to Anoop Nautiyal, founder of the SDC Foundation, the data reveals a stark seasonal imbalance: 34% of pilgrims arrived in the first 30 days, followed by another 38% in the next 30 days, with peak pressure in the second week of June when 5.47 lakh pilgrims flooded the routes in just seven days, while weather disruptions and the monsoon led to 86 days across the five shrines when footfall fell to zero.

"The data indicates that the pilgrimage is not distributed evenly across the season," the report notes, pointing to 38 "zero-footfall" days in Yamunotri and 35 in Gangotri.

The SDC Foundation report raises alarm bells regarding helicopter operations along the Kedarnath route. During a six-week period, officials recorded five separate aviation incidents, two of which were fatal, claiming approximately 13 lives. The report singled out the incident near Gaurikund as a particularly concerning indicator of systemic failure.

Nautiyal further urged the government to move beyond celebrating numbers.

2 buildings
collapse in central Istanbul after gas explosion, one dead and eight rescued

GLOBAL WEATHER
LR: Light Rain • HR: Heavy Rain • LS: Light Snow • TDS: Thundershower • LC: Light Cloud • SNY: Sunny

Beijing	21	7	SNY	Los Angeles	28	15	SNY
Colombo	31	25	SNY	Melbourne	26	14	LC
Dhaka	31	19	SNY	Moscow	4	2	SNY
Dubai	26	21	SNY	New York	7	2	SNY
Houston	29	17	TDS	Singapore	30	26	TDS
Istanbul	33	21	SNY	Toronto	5	4	SNY
London	13	12	SNY	Washington	27	22	SNY

Netanyahu visits strike-hit town, vows to target Guards leaders

Key nuclear-linked town Dimona hit by Iran missile as Israel widens conflict, launches strikes on Hezbollah positions and infrastructure across south Lebanon

JERUSALEM/ BEIRUT

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Sunday to pursue senior commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards "personally", during a visit to a town struck by an Iranian missile the previous day. "We're going after the regime. We're going after the IRGC, this criminal gang," Netanyahu said, as he inspected the damage in the southern Israeli town of Arad.

"We're going after them personally, their leaders, their installations, their economic assets. We're going after them personally." The second town struck by an Iranian missile on Saturday was Dimona, widely believed to house Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal. Nestled in the Negev desert, Dimona sustained extensive damage from a direct hit.

On Sunday, Netanyahu visited the town, urging residents to heed instructions from the military's Home Front Command and take shelter immediately whenever sirens warn of incoming missiles. "The whole nation is a frontline, the entire home front is a frontline. And when we're at the frontline, we carry out these orders," Netanyahu said. "So please do this — and this is an order." Netanyahu said missile attacks on Israeli cities, near Jerusalem's holy sites, and toward a UK military base in the Indian Ocean, along with the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz, are all evidence that Iran is a threat to the world.

"Israel and the United States are working together for the entire world," Netanyahu said in the southern town of Arad, which was hit by an Iranian missile, wounding dozens of people. "It's time to see the leaders of the rest of the countries join us." he told to foreign journalists. Netanyahu claimed that some are "beginning to move in that direction" but more are needed.

Meanwhile, Israel said it struck Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon on Sunday shortly after the military was ordered to destroy bridges used by the Iran-backed militant group across the Litani River.

Lebanese official media reported Israeli raids in several areas of the south, while an AFP correspondent saw smoke billowing from a key bridge that was hit outside the city of Tyre, in an escalation in violence in Lebanon after two days of relative reprieve.

Lebanon was drawn into the war after Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel on March 2 over Khamenei's killing. *AFP*

Smoke and flames rise from an Israeli airstrike that hit the Qasmiyeh Bridge near the coastal city of Tyre, Lebanon | AP

Israeli settlers torch homes, vehicles in West Bank violence

RAMALLAH

ISRAELI settlers rampaged through multiple Palestinian villages overnight on Saturday and into Sunday, smashing cars, setting fires and wounding several men in the latest flare-up of violence in the occupied West Bank.

The official Palestinian news agency WAFA reported attacks in at least six communities on Sunday. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said at least three Palestinians in the village of Jalud suffered head wounds from beatings and were hospitalized after confronting settlers, who were also reported injured.

The violence came as Israel's government presses ahead with new settlements in the occupied West Bank. Attacks by settlers have intensified alongside a broader surge in violence since the Iran war started.

Israel's military said it responded to Israeli civilians carrying out "arson against structures and property, as well as engaging in disturbances in the area," but did not report any arrests or indicate whether investigations were opened.

WAFA reported attacks in the villages of Silat al Dahr and Fandaqumiya, both near Jenin; in Jalud and Salfit, both south of Nablus; and in the agricultural regions Masafer Yatta and the Jordan Valley. Homes and cars were set ablaze, Palestinians were pepper-sprayed and at least five people were wounded in the overnight assaults, which took place during the Eid al-Fitr holiday marking the end of Ramadan, the agency said.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 25 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers and soldiers this year as of March 15. The Palestinian Authority has also documented a series of arson attacks, including on mosques, across the territory. The rampage followed the death of an 18-year-old settler in a collision with a Palestinian vehicle near the attacked villages. *AP*

Fuel price spike may cripple 90% of Lankan bus services

COLOMBO

THE non-state bus operators in Sri Lanka on Sunday warned 90 per cent of their fleet may be off the road due to the extensive price hike of fuel which came into force from midnight. The island nation raised fuel retail prices at midnight, the second such hike in a week.

The step comes in the backdrop of the joint US-Israel strikes against Iran and the retaliation by the Islamic nation that has spread to the entire Gulf region. It has led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically important choke point for the world's energy supplies. Calling it the steepest diesel hike ever, private bus owners' chief Gamunu Wijeratne said buses cannot run without a fare revision, seeking at least a 15% hike to stay afloat.

Private operators dominate public transport with a 65–75% share, while the state fleet accounts for 25–35%. A midnight price revision raised diesel by LKR 79 to LKR 382 per litre, while three-wheeler operators said petrol prices also climbed to nearly LKR 400 per litre. *PTI*

WAR WATCH

Iran says US-Israel strikes caused heavy damage to water, power infra

TEHRAN

IRAN's critical water and energy infrastructure have suffered extensive damage due to US and Israeli strikes on tens of thousands of civilian sites, officials said on Sunday.

Israel and the United States launched strikes on Iran on February 28, killing the Islamic republic's supreme leader and sparking a war that has since spread across the Middle East.

"The country's vital water and electricity infrastructure has suffered heavy damage following terrorist and cyber attacks by the United States and the Zionist regime," said energy minister Abbas Aliabadi, according to ISNA news agency.

"The attacks targeted dozens of water transmission and treatment facilities and destroyed parts of critical water supply networks," he noted, adding that efforts were under way to repair the damage.

Iran's Red Crescent chief Pirhossein Kolivand said the total number of damaged civilian sites "has reached 81,365 based on the latest field assessments".

He said the figure includes residential and commercial units, schools, medical centres and vehicles. "Behind every damaged unit stands a family, a life, a memory, a livelihood, and a future that has collapsed beneath the rubble of war and violence," he added.

AFP could not verify figures beyond Tehran; damage was reported. More than 1,200 Iranians have been killed in US and Israeli strikes, according to the latest toll from Iran's health ministry on March 8, which could not be independently verified. *AFP*

NATO chief backs Trump push on Strait of Hormuz, says allies stepping up

DUBAI: Mark Rutte, NATO's secretary-general, acknowledged on Sunday that Trump has been angry at other countries over his push to get allies more involved in reopening the Strait of Hormuz. But Rutte stressed during an interview with Fox News that more than 20 countries now are "coming together to implement his vision" to ensure the shipping channel can function. Rutte, who said he spoke with Trump several times this week, said it was "crucial" that the US was taking military action in Iran since its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes posed an "existential" threat to the world

Mayoral run-offs across France seen as key test before presidential election

PARIS

VOTERS cast their ballots for mayors in major French cities on Sunday, with the left battling to keep Paris while the far right eyes gains ahead of next year's presidential election.

Most of the country's almost 35,000 villages, towns and boroughs elected their leaders in a first round last weekend, but the races went to run-offs in about 1,500 communes, including bigger urban centres.

The local ballots are being closely watched to gauge the mood on the ground and potential party alliances before the election of a successor to centrist President Emmanuel Macron next year, with the far right scenting its best chance yet at seizing power.

Patrice Laurent, 77, was among those voting Sunday in Paris, a capital of some two million inhabitants that has been under leftist leadership for the past 25 years.

"I don't want the city to go back to the right," he said, outside a school turned polling station in northeastern Paris.

The race is tight between leftist Emmanuel Gregoire — a former deputy of outgoing Socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo — and his runner-up in the first round, right-wing ex-minister Rachida Dati.

The former justice and culture minister, a mentee of now convicted ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy, hopes to seize Paris for the right and become its second woman mayor in a row.

Dati, who faces trial in September on corruption charges she denies, has boosted her chances after a centre-right candidate and a far-right hopeful dropped out. Meanwhile, Gregoire has refused to join forces with a hard-left contender who has remained in the race, splitting the leftist vote. Leftists and centrists have allied in recent elections against the far right, but the left has been fractured since the fatal beating last month of a far-right activist blamed on fringe leftists.

The legacy of the outgoing Paris mayor, Hidalgo, includes bike lanes and making the Seine swimmable for the first time in a century for the 2024 Summer Olympics. But critics accuse her of merely shifting traffic elsewhere, while allowing security and cleanliness to deteriorate. Dati pledged to prioritise security and waste, and was re-elected mayor of Paris's 7th district. *AFP*

ASIA MATTERS

INDONESIA

PRABOWO DENIES $1 BILLION PEACE BOARD PLEDGE

President Prabowo Subianto said he never pledged $1 billion to the Board of Peace, an initiative linked to US President Donald Trump. He clarified his country was not among those committing funds at the group's February meeting in Washington. While ruling out any such promise, he said support would continue through peacekeeping troops in Gaza and humanitarian aid. Financial contributions could be considered later if reconstruction begins. He also stressed no funding commitment was made to secure membership, amid reports suggesting such requirements.

SINGAPORE

VAPES WORTH $1.1M SEIZED, MAN HELD

Authorities seized over $1.1 million worth of vapes and components, arresting a 29-year-old man linked to a warehouse used for local distribution. The haul, nearly 67,000 items, is the largest since September 2025. Investigations are ongoing, with strict penalties in place for vape-related offences and repeat violations.

THAILAND

NOMINEE CRACKDOWN, 4 FIRMS SHUT

Authorities have intensified a crackdown on suspected "nominee" businesses, ordering the closure of four tour firms after finding legal violations. Inspections in a key tourism hub uncovered irregular shareholding patterns, including one individual linked to over 100 companies, raising concerns of foreign ownership circumvention. Officials also flagged illegal real estate activities and are gathering evidence for further action. Over 140 foreign-linked firms are under scrutiny, with authorities warning of strict penalties and continued inspections.

Trump to feature on gold coin for US 250th anniv

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump is all set to feature on a gold coin to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary, amid questions over the legality of the move. The 24-karat gold coin, portraying Trump leaning on the Resolute desk with clenched fists, will be only the second time a living president has featured on a coin.

Earlier, Calvin Coolidge, the 30th US President had featured on a commemorative coin alongside George Washington that were minted in 1926 to celebrate 150 years of the US Independence.

The US Commission on Fine Arts, at its meeting on March 19, approved the design of the commemorative gold coin, which will be minted once the final dimensions are decided.

"As we approach our 250th birthday, we are thrilled to prepare coins that represent the enduring spirit of our country and democracy, and there is no profile more emblematic for the front of such coins than that of our serving President, Donald J Trump," US Treasurer Brandon Beach said in a statement to FOX Business.

US Federal law states that no living president can appear on US currency. However, Beach said the proposed commemorative coin would be separate from circulating currency and the Treasury Secretary has sole discretion over the final design selection and authorising its minting.

Democrats have termed the Trump-themed gold coin embarrassing and against the nation's values. "Monarchs and dictators put their faces on coins, not leaders of a democracy," Sen Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) was quoted by The Washington Post. The coin is expected to join a slate of special-edition currencies and medals the Treasury is releasing to celebrate the 250th anniversary of US Independence. *PTI*

Cuba restores power after third grid collapse in March

HAVANA

CUBA began restoring its energy system on Sunday, a day after a nationwide collapse of the entire grid left millions of people in the dark for the third time this month. Some 72,000 customers in the capital, among them five hospitals, had electricity again early Sunday, according to a report from the state-run Electric Union and the Ministry of Energy and Mines, but it's only a fraction of Havana's total population of approximately 2 million.

In Havana and provinces such as western Matanzas and eastern Holguin, local power microsystems were set up to supply the most vital centers. Residents in some areas of the capital told The Associated Press that power returned during the early morning hours. Cuba is currently facing an unprecedented energy crisis. Its aging grid has drastically eroded in recent years, but the government has also blamed the outages on a US energy blockade, after President Donald Trump in January warned of tariffs on any country that sells oil to Cuba. His administration is demanding that Cuba release political prisoners and move toward political and economic liberalisation in return for a lifting of sanctions. Trump also raised the possibility of a "friendly takeover of Cuba."

Another reason Cuba has been struggling with dwindling oil is the removal by the US of Venezuela's former President Nicolás Maduro, which halted critical petroleum shipments from the nation that had been a steadfast ally to Havana. President Miguel Díaz-Canel has said the island has not received oil from foreign suppliers for three months. Cuba produces barely 40% of the fuel it needs.

Daily blackouts disrupt lives through reduced work hours, power shortages for cooking and damage to appliances. "With the blackout and low voltage, my refrigerator broke — that was today. The day before yesterday, the voltage also dropped around 10 at night," Suleydi Crespo, a 33-year-old woman, told AP. *AP*

People spend the night in dark on the Malecon in Havana, Cuba | AP

Cuba preparing for US attack, seeks dialogue

WASHINGTON: Cuba is preparing for a potential US attack but insists it has "no quarrel" with Washington, Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio said. He stressed readiness for defence while signalling willingness to hold talks. The remarks come as the island faces a fuel crunch linked to a US oil blockade and the loss of supplies after Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro was captured in a US operation earlier this year, worsening shortages.

Tight election in Slovenia as conservatives seek return

LJUBLJANAN

SLOVENIANS were voting on Sunday in tight parliamentary elections, with the conservatives of veteran politician Janez Jansa, an admirer of US President Donald Trump, eyeing a comeback.

A Jansa return could see the ex-Yugoslav nation, a European Union member of two million people, take an illiberal turn again after four years of centre-left rule under liberal Prime Minister Robert Golob.

Foreign interference claims have shaken the campaign, with authorities probing whether an Israeli company was behind secretly recorded videos suggesting alleged graft in Golob's government. "These elections are important," Petra Kladnik, a 40-year-old lawyer, told AFP at a polling station in the capital, Ljubljana.

She added the video scandal "had a strong impact on the community but not on my decision today". Jansa's conservatives long polled ahead of Golob's liberals, but the gap has recently closed, with the two parties running neck-and-neck in fresh opinion polls ahead of the vote. Under Golob, a political newcomer who took office in 2022, Slovenia legalised same-sex marriage and called Israel's Gaza war "genocide". *AFP*

Slovenia's Prime Minister Robert Golob casts his vote at a polling station | AFP

₹88,180 CR Foreign investors have pulled out from Indian equities so far this month, weighed down by West Asia war, fall in rupee and concerns over elevated crude oil prices

I-T rules: What changes for salaried persons

From in-hand salary to exemptions in gifts & HRA from employers, new law overhauls tax structure for this segment

PUSHPITA DEY @ Chennai

WITH the Income-tax Act, 2025 set to be implemented from April 1, 2026, salaried individuals will see substantial changes in their taxation. From in-hand salary to exemptions for employer-provided gifts and house rent allowance (HRA), the new law overhauls the tax structure for this segment.

Tax experts say that changes in perquisite valuation and allowance exemptions will have a tangible impact on the tax outgo.

"The taxable value of employer-provided cars has been significantly increased — from ₹2,700/₹3,300 per month to ₹8,000/₹10,000 per month depending on engine capacity—resulting in a higher taxable salary," said Gaurav Makhijani, Partner at Makhijani Gera & Associates LLP.

The government has also revised perquisite rules under the Income-tax Rules, 2026 to include electric vehicles (EVs) at par with small cars. EVs used partly for personal purposes will attract a taxable value of ₹5,000 or ₹2,000 per month, depending on maintenance and chauffeur costs.

Reliefs provided

However, some relief has also been provided. The exemption for employer-provided gifts has been enhanced from ₹5,000 to ₹15,000 per annum, offering some respite to the salaried class. The new regime also proposes simpler perquisite valuation and higher tax-free limits on benefits.

Exemptions now include employer-provided gifts up to ₹15,000, meals up to ₹200 per meal, and medical loans up to ₹2 lakh.

There is also a substantial increase in several allowance exemptions. For instance, the Children Education Allowance and Hostel Expenditure Allowance limits have been significantly enhanced.

The education allowance has been raised from ₹100 per month per child (up to two children) to ₹3,000 per month per child (up to two children). Similarly, the hostel expenditure allowance has been increased from ₹300 per month per child to ₹9,000 per month per child, for up to two children.

Another major relief comes in terms of HRA.

When HRA was introduced in 1964, it aimed to meet employees' rent-related expenses. The Income-tax law had recognised only four cities—Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi—as 'metro cities', where employees could claim HRA up to 50% of their basic salary. For other cities, the limit was 40%.

While the Government of India recognised cities such as Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Kochi, Madurai, and Thiruvananthapuram as metros in 1993, the higher HRA benefit was not extended to them. Under the Income-tax Act, 2025, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Ahmedabad have now been added to the list, allowing employees in these cities to claim HRA up to 50% of their basic salary.

More disclosures

"HRA-related Form No. 124 explicitly seeks the relationship with the landlord. This means taxpayers will now have to disclose who they are paying rent to and under what capacity. This will help the tax department analyse patterns and identify cases where rent may be paid to parents, siblings, or close relatives for tax savings," said Prabhakar K S, Founder & CEO, Shree Tax Chambers.

The form also mandates submission of a rent agreement and PAN (Aadhaar not required) if the annual rent exceeds Rs 1 lakh. In case of non-compliance, employers are required to deduct TDS without allowing HRA claims.

IN CONVERSATION

RAJIV MITTAL
Chairman and managing director of VA Tech WABAG Limited

'Our $400 mn exposure to West Asia remains largely unaffected so far'

As geopolitical tensions simmer across West Asia, concerns over supply chains, infrastructure resilience and project execution have come into focus for companies with significant presence in the region. For water technology firms, the stakes are high given critical nature of desalination and wastewater treatment in some of the world's most water-stressed economies. **Rajiv Mittal**, chairman and MD of VA Tech WABAG Limited, tells TNIE's **Dipak Mondal** how WABAG is navigating the ongoing conflict, ensuring business continuity, while underscoring the strategic importance of water infrastructure and the long-term growth potential of a region undergoing economic and industrial transformation. **Excerpts**

How the ongoing conflict in West Asia impacted WABAG's operations and project portfolio?
So far our portfolio of about $400 million across construction, operations and maintenance contracts has remained largely unaffected. Operations across Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and other parts of the Gulf have continued without disruption, and we have not seen immediate negative impact on execution.

What measures have you taken to ensure continuity of operations in such a challenging environment?
We have taken a proactive approach by curtailing travel and ensuring that our personnel are stationed close to project sites with accommodation arrangements in place. This has helped us maintain operational stability and ensure that both construction and O&M activities continue smoothly.

How do you see the role of water infrastructure in the region, especially in the current context?
Water infrastructure is critical in West Asia given the region's dependence on desalinated water for drinking and treated wastewater for industrial and irrigation purposes. Any disruption in water supply becomes a strategic issue, mainly during times of conflict.

The Chennai project is a significant step towards building resilient urban water systems. A looped grid improves supply flexibility, enhances pressure management, and reduces systemic vulnerabilities

Do you see any opportunities emerging from the current situation?
While there has been no disruption, a prolonged conflict may create opportunities for the sector. Damage to key infrastructure like desalination plants may lead to demand for reconstruction, refurbishment and upgrading of facilities, which plays to our strengths.

What is your outlook for the region in terms of growth and future opportunities?
The region continues to remain a key contributor to our business, accounting for 30% of our revenue and nearly 60% of our international operations. Beyond current situation, West Asia is undergoing a structural transformation with governments focusing on industrialisation, reducing dependence on oil and promoting localisation. Emerging sectors such as data centres, supported by stable energy and low power costs, are expected to drive incremental demand for water solutions, reinforcing our long-term growth outlook.

WABAG has secured a wastewater treatment project in Georgia, marking its entry into the CIS region. How does this project fit into your broader international strategy?
This project marks our entry into Georgia and wider CIS region, and is a strategic addition to our global portfolio. Securing an European Investment Bank (EIB)-funded project reflects our strong technical capabilities and consistent execution track record.

WABAG's JV has secured ADB-funded 'Mega' order to develop a city-wide looped water grid in Chennai. How significant is this project for urban water management in India?
The Chennai project is a major step towards building resilient urban water systems. A looped grid improves supply flexibility, enhances pressure management, and reduces systemic vulnerabilities.

MONEY-WISE

KEEP MKT RETURN EXPECTATIONS LOW

FINANCIAL ADVICE

PV SUBRAMANYAM
writes at www.subramoney.com and has authored the best seller 'Retire Rich - Invest ₹40 a day'

EQUITY returns in India over the past 5-10 years have been good. Especially for those who invested from 2020 onwards. It's helpful to benchmark against recent performance. Over the past 6 years (March 2020-March 2026), Indian large-cap indices like the Nifty 50 delivered strong compounded annual growth rates (CAGR) of about 15-20%, while mid-caps and small-caps outperformed dramatically with CAGRs exceeding 30-40% in some segments.

For the past 10 years (2016-2026), the Nifty 50 has averaged about 13% CAGR, aligning with its long-term historical norm, but this period benefited from post-COVID recovery, low interest rates, and robust economic growth averaging 7-8% GDP annually.

However, 2025 marked a sharp slowdown, with the MSCI India Index returning only about 2.2% in USD terms, its worst relative performance in three decades compared to Asian and emerging market peers.

Why equity returns may be lower in next 5-10 years

Several structural and cyclical factors suggest equity returns could moderate to single-digit or low double-digit CAGRs (e.g., 8-12%) over the next 5-10 years, compared to the 13-20%+ seen recently. This isn't a prediction of doom but a reflection of mean reversion, where exceptional past gains often lead to periods of consolidation. Key reasons include - elevated Valuations as a Drag on Future Returns, much lower inflation, and geopolitical risks. The Nifty 50 trades at about 21x forward price-to-earnings (P/E) for FY26 estimates, which is at the higher end of its 10-year range (22-28x).

However, the last 18 months have seen some moderation of prices and the recent month (Mar 2026) has seen some drawdown making the markets look attractive. Corporate earnings growth is decelerating, with MSCI India estimates for FY26 at just 10%, down from the prior years. This stems from muted domestic consumption, disappointing quarterly results (e.g., five quarters of depressed earnings through 2025), and GDP growth projections dipping to 6.4% for FY25—the slowest in four years. The Trump War is not helping anyone too!

Without deeper structural reforms (e.g., judicial, police, or labor changes), sustained high growth may remain elusive.The Indian rupee weakened by over 5% against the USD in 2025, eroding dollar-denominated returns for global investors. This, combined with heavy foreign institutional investor (FII) outflows , has pressured markets. In the past decade, a stable or appreciating rupee supported returns.

Mid- and small-caps exploded with 400%+ gains over the past 5 years, far outpacing large-caps, but historical data shows this leads to extended consolidation periods to align with long-term averages (around 13% for large-caps).

India's equity market has experienced "lost decades" before—e.g., flat to negative returns from 1992-2003 and 2008-2013—where even 10-year holding periods yielded low single-digits after dividends.

MONEY MATTERS

WHY INDIAN SHARES ARE WORST PERFORMERS

FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE

RAJAS KELKAR
(The author is editor-in-chief at www.moneyminute.in)

IT was supposed to be an oasis in an otherwise turbulent world. For a long time, when the Indian story was sold to investors, it was the soaring domestic consumption story that attracted them. Government capital spending and household spending by the rising middle class were considered drivers of India's growth that could not be affected by external problems. Since December 2024, the India story has been in relative decline.

Indian shares have underperformed the rest of the world so far in 2026. Other emerging markets and Asian equities have also clocked significantly higher returns. Over the past 12 months, the Nifty 50 has been up 13.8%, while the Korean benchmark has jumped 146% and Taiwanese shares have risen 70%.

After pulling out a record $19bn from Indian equities in 2025, foreign portfolio investors continue to see the red in the India story. They pulled out another $1.5 in the first two months of 2026. The only saving grace for India is the net inflow into domestic mutual fund equities. They have been net buyers, as their mandate is to invest in Indian equities through domestic equity-linked mutual funds. The momentum of flows into domestic equities has slowed in the first two months. The presence of domestic money is holding up Indian shares. Had it not been for a decisive shift in household savings to equities, Indian shares would have done worse.

Market analysts believe that today's prices are a reflection of tomorrow's profits. With stress on external trade due to surging crude oil prices and disruptions to exports via key trade routes in the Middle East, the Indian rupee is expected to continue sliding to new lows. That has spooked international investors. However, it is not just the rupee's value. The share price valuation was expensive relative to other markets despite the underperformance. Foreigners were unwilling to pay higher prices because businesses with stronger profit growth and dividend yields were available in other markets such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China.

What does it mean to you

The 'oasis' story drove all stocks higher. It is now time to learn about the concept of 'earnings compounding'. You have to focus on businesses that have prospects for multifold profit growth. The Nifty price-earnings forward ratio is now below the 10-year average. That means large-cap valuations have adjusted to reflect roughly 10% earnings growth.

In the meantime, mid-caps and small-caps saw significant wealth erosion (down nearly 20% from 2024 peaks). That means investing in equities is about being a stock picker, not a trend follower. You need to choose businesses that are likely to generate consistent profits and return money to shareholders through dividends and buybacks. You can apply that formula to established businesses. New-age businesses with compounding revenue growth and a growing customer base can eventually generate profits.

There is an argument that India's economic growth over the past decade to 2023 was not as fast as it was announced. There was a strong emphasis on themes such as premium consumption. Sectors such as hotels, luxury real estate, and cars saw a significant upswing after the pandemic. It is likely to continue, analysts say. However, there is a visible slowdown in middle-class consumption.

You need to learn to distinguish between the high-end consumption class and the mass-consumption middle class. Identify businesses that consistently grow revenue and invest.

Your investments could be in 8-10 stocks you identify yourself or with the help of a professional advisor. You can also make those investments through mutual funds by picking the right schemes.

EXPRESS ILLUSTRATION

Titan bets big on premium segment

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

TITAN will add 20-25 Helios Luxe outlets in the coming financial year (FY27) as it aims to increase its presence in the fast-growing luxury segment. The Tata Group company will continue to open 30-40 standalone Helios stores per annum as it expects premiumisation to play an important role in its efforts to clock $1 billion in revenue from the watches business in FY27 and $2 billion by FY30.

Helios Luxe operates 9 boutiques across India, and has plans to have 15 boutiques before the end of this financial year. With 5 exclusive and 7 other global brands introduced to India over past 18 months, Helios has emerged as a strategic gateway for global watchmakers seeking entry into the country.

"We will add 20 to 25 plus Helios Luxe stores in the coming year. Right now, these stores are largely in the metros. However, as we go further, we are signing a lot of stores in tier 2 towns because a large part of India's wealth is sitting there," Rahul Shukla, VP & CSMO, Watches Division, Titan Company, told TNIE.

Helios Luxe plans to have 15 boutiques this fiscal

Helios Luxe operates 9 boutiques across India, and has plans to have 15 boutiques before end of this fiscal. With 5 exclusive and 7 other global brands introduced to India over past 18 months, Helios has emerged as a strategic gateway for global watchmakers seeking entry into the country.

The accessible luxury space, which is priced between ₹1 lakh and ₹5 lakh, has been growing at around 23% as a category. Titan claims in Helios Luxe, this segment has been growing at about 46%, backed by a wide portfolio of brands, a growing economy and the rise of the affluent class who do not shy away from indulging in luxury.

India's watch market is currently estimated at ₹26,000 crore. Roughly half of it is sitting on watch prices above ₹25,000. In the sub ₹25,000, we have a substantial market share close to 47-48%.

"Our journey in accessible luxury space has started recently with global and in-house brands. Currently, Helios is growing at a CAGR of 24%, and now we are looking to fast-track growth because we are increasing the proportion and the expansion of accessible luxury segment, which is growing at a faster pace. The pace we are growing, we expect Helios to clock ₹2000 revenue in less than 3 years," stated Shukla.

Kotak Mahindra Bank to offload 31% stake in Infina Finance for ₹1,294 cr

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

KOTAK Mahindra Bank will sell a 31% stake in Infina Finance for ₹1,294 crore to three different buyers. This strategic move involves transfer of equity to three distinct groups of buyers and is expected to be completed on or before March 31, 2026.

The first part of the transaction involves transfer of 2,17,899 equity shares, representing a 9.90% stake, to Derive Trading and Resorts and Bright Star Investments for ₹413 crore. Additionally, 266,321 equity shares, or a 12.10% stake, will be sold to the Estate of Rakesh Jhunjhunwala through various discretionary trusts for ₹505 crore. KF Trust, an existing shareholder whose beneficiaries belong to the Bank's promoter group, will acquire 1,97,870 equity shares (an 8.99% stake) for ₹376 crore.

As of the financial year ending March 31, 2025, Infina Finance reported a turnover of ₹532.66 crore and a net worth of ₹2,727.99 crore. While the bank noted that the sales to the Jhunjhunwala trusts and the initial investment firms do not constitute related party transactions, the sale to KF Trust is considered a related party transaction conducted at "arm's length".

Founded in 1996, Infina Finance is a non-banking financial company, registered with the Reserve Bank of India, catering to various financial needs. Infina is owned by Kotak Mahindra Bank through its subsidiary Kotak Mahindra Capital Company (KMCC) and the Kotak family, offers services like lending against securities, lending against property, commercial real estate & insurance corporate agency.

Upon completion of these transfers, KMCC's remaining stake in Infina will be reduced to 19%, resulting in Infina ceasing to be an associate company of Kotak Mahindra Bank. This disclosure was made in compliance with Regulation 30 of the SEBI Listing Regulations.

Humpy pulls out of Candidates owing to West Asia conflict

Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy on Sunday decided to withdraw from the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament, citing concerns over her personal safety despite assurances from the organisers in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict. The Candidates is scheduled to begin in Paphos, Cyprus on March 28.

With another IPL edition coming up, we have decided to run a 5-part series on players, who briefly flickered & owned the stage. Part 1 features Asnodkar, who played a big role in helping Royals to title

FROM DREAM IPL TO EARLY RETIREMENT

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

SWAPNIL Asnodkar will turn 42 in a few days. Now a father to two lovely kids, the former Goa batter will look to catch some of the IPL action as the league begins on March 28 — a day before his birthday. The priority, however, will be Kerala U23 boys, whom the former opening batter is coaching these days.

Priorities could change with time but not memories and Asnodkar knows it well. It was the inaugural IPL season in 2008 which made him a household name with legend Shane Warne nicknaming him Goa Cannon and fans comparing him to Sri Lanka's Romesh Kaluwitharana given his diminutive stature and fearless batting approach.

His daughter and son might be unaware of his exploits in the league given their age but ardent IPL fans still remember Asnodkar along with former South Africa captain Graeme Smith for giving quick starts to Rajasthan Royals that eventually helped the Warne-led side to clinch the title.

"It was amazing. If I think about it now, it was 19 years — a long time ago. We had played Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy before but IPL was on another level. Legends of the game were playing there. Sharing the dressing room with them, playing alongside them, playing against them was a dream come true obviously. It was a game changer for me. Before IPL, I used to score a lot of runs but people used to know me by name but after IPL things changed and people started knowing me by my face also," said Asnodkar.

'The land of beaches' was Warne's response the moment Asnodkar told the spin wizard that he is from Goa. "Meeting Warne for the first time was the best experience I would say. Obviously spending time with him and learning from him was a huge takeaway. Unfortunately, he is not there with us," said Asnodkar, who played scored 5883 runs from 88 FC matches.

The tactical genius he was, late Warne was regarded as the best captain Australia never had (he captained in 11 ODIs but never in Tests). Rajasthan Royals, however, had him and the legbreak googly bowler proved his worth by leading the team to the inaugural title despite a lot of youngsters like Asnodkar, Ravindra Jadeja and Yusuf Pathan at his disposal. Asnodkar said Warne's simple methods did wonders for him and other rookies. "He was asking us to just go and play our natural game rather than being under pressure. That actually helped us to give our best. He along with Darren Barry, our coach, both played a big role."

The first season yielded 311 runs from nine matches for Asnodkar and the largely fruitful campaign earned him an India A call-up later that year when Australia and New Zealand A teams visited the country for a 50-over tri-series. The squad included Suresh Raina, Rohit Sharma, Yusuf and Irfan Pathan. Unlike his RR teammate Yusuf, Asnodkar, who got run out twice before being dropped ahead of the final league match, did not have a series to remember. "That time, Goa didn't have indoor practice facilities. It was very difficult to prepare in June as it rains a lot here. I was not well prepared then to be honest. I didn't have the best of stints, I got run out twice in the series. I don't regret it but yeah opportunity was there to take unfortunately I missed out on it," he said.

Asnodkar continued playing for Goa till early 2018 but could not find his name in the list of probables after that. He waited for a year or two before announcing his retirement in 2019. "Obviously it was a bit sad that I have to give up this game because I love this game and at the age of 35 I had to retire. If you see Paras Dogra, he is still playing even after 40. But I always believe, whatever happens, it happens for good and now I am enjoying coaching and really looking forward to being a coach," added Asnodkar.

He then joined age group teams from Goa as a coach in 2019 and worked with them for the next four-five years before switching his allegiance to Nagaland as a batting coach. The team was in Plate Group then but promoted to Elite Group during the season. With Nagaland deciding not to have additional support staff, Asnodkar tried his luck with nearly seven or eight state sides with Kerala finalising him as the coach for their U23 state side recently.

Asnodkar might have played three more IPL seasons after 2008 but could not replicate the success of the first edition. The experience he had during his IPL stint, however, is still helping him in his new role as a coach. "Obviously it helps. You tend to link to situations quickly. If a player goes through a rough patch, you tend to understand what might be the player's mindset. As I have seen everything, it has become easy for me. I try to converse with players and open them up and speak their mind. That way it helps to guide them in a better way. That also helps me to play a psychologist's role because it's more mental rather than technique."

There have been enough examples where a player, despite not having a very successful career, went on to become a legendary coach. Asnodkar, who strongly believes in destiny, could be the next in the league. "Not really, they are still young. Maybe someday they will read and know what their father did," was Asnodkar's response when queried whether his children knew about his 2008 IPL exploits. Maybe a few years down the line, they would get to read how their father became a successful coach despite not being so successful as a player.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

WHAT THEY DID AT THE AUCTION: Having acknowledged the shortcomings of 2025, CSK ticked a big box by trading Sanju Samson from RR for Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran. The auction was all about building a strong Indian core and they went all in on uncapped stars like Prashant Veer and Kartik Sharma. Another batting heavy unit but it is hard to undo the shortcomings of a bowling attack in one mini auction. Unless Khaleel Ahmed can find their mojo in the powerplay, this aspect may suffer.

CAPTAIN'S WATCH: Proclaimed as the anointed one, Ruturaj Gaikwad has not lived up to the expectations so far. After back-to-back poor seasons, he will feel the heat this year. After all, the world knows there is another captaincy candidate waiting in Samson. Though Ruturaj is still their captain, the Maharashtra batter has a lot to prove. If things do not go well once again, the management may have no choice but to look at Samson as an option.

WHAT THEY DID LAST SEASON: If 2020 saw CSK slump to bottom for the first time, 2025 was worse. Their rigid approach was found out as CSK struggled to match the other teams in terms of firepower up top. It reflected in the mood of their fanbase too. They tried to course correct but it was too late, as the five-time winners finished bottom of the table.

SERIAL CONTENDERS & HOLDERS

WITH THE INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE STARTING ON 28TH MARCH, WE WILL TAKE A LOOK AT ALL 10 TEAMS IN THE RUN UP TO THE 19TH EDITION. FIRST UP, THE FORTUNES OF CHENNAI SUPER KINGS AND ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU

WHAT THEY DID AT THE AUCTION: They are one of the few teams who had very little to do at the auction considering the well-rounded squad in place. For RCB, it was all about getting back up options and plugging small gaps. Their biggest signing was Venkatesh Iyer, who is coming on the back of a disastrous season with KKR. The likes of Jordan Cox and Jacob Duffy supplement the squad, especially with fitness concerns over Josh Hazlewood. Things will have to go horribly wrong for them to have a bad season.

CAPTAIN'S WATCH: It may forever be Virat Kohli's RCB, but Rajat Patidar wrote a new chapter in his first season as captain. This season will be his chance to show the world that the 2025 triumph will not remain a one-time thing. He leads a team filled with stars and multiple captains, but Patidar has made his intentions clear as a captain. Consecutive titles could just be the icing on the cake for the Madhya Pradesh batter to become Bengaluru royalty.

WHAT THEY DID LAST SEASON: For years, RCB went for the batting stars and fell short when it mattered. Until 2025. With a solid bowling attack, and a heavily aggressive batting line-up to compliment Kohli, RCB hit the ground running and never looked back. It was a season of dominance on the field, one they are capable of replicating again.

RECENT RECORD

Tenth	fifth	winners	ninth	winners	FIRST THREE MATCHES	Winners	fourth	sixth	third	fourth
Mar 30	Apr 3	Apr 5		Mar 28	Apr 5	Apr 10
vs RR, Guwahati	vs PBKS, Chennai	vs, RCB, Bengaluru		vs SRH, Bengaluru	vs CSK, Bengaluru	vs, RR, Guwahati

CSK fan moment: Music, song, mirth and cricket

ASHOK VENUGOPAL @ Chennai

IT was a heady mix of talent from different fields but with one common thread — all of them are and can be called performing artists (sports too can be one). The MA Chidambaram Stadium reverberated with vibes of the music, song, dance and of course, cricket.

What happens when MS Dhoni and AR Rahman meet on a cricket field? Chaos of a beautiful kind. The two, safely can be called the masters of art — music and cricket — captivated the crowd with there mere presence. They are not the only ones though. It was nostalgia time too. The current Chennai Super Kings squad played against some of the finest have played for CSK over the last 18 years. Spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan, Matthew Hayden, Dwayne Bravo, L Balaji, S Badrinath, Suresh Raina, Parthiv Patel, Harbhajan Singh, Anirudha Srikkanth, M Vijay, M Hussey all former CSK players enthralled the fans on a balmy Sunday evening.

Bravo sang his favourite 'Champion, Champion' rendition for a while and has had the crowd on its feet. Some of the former and current stars entertained too. The theme was

Actor Sivakarthikeyan interacts with CSK's MS Dhoni at MA Chidambaram Stadium ; Music maestro AR Rahman (L) performs | PJAWAHAR

three boundaries in six balls. The first player to bat in the evening was CSK batting coach Mike Hussey. 'Mr cricket' as he is known proved again why he is rated highly as a batting coach. He faced CSK captain Ruturaj Gaikwad and cleared the ropes all six balls. Two were sixes. His technique, stance, bat swing were in perfect synchronization and looked still good enough to play competitive cricket. The highlight of the evening was World Cup hero Sanju Samson playing against the legendary Muttiah Muralitharan.

Murali, as he is affectionately known as, sporting his 800 number jersey (symbolizing his 800 wickets), was at his willy best, beating Sanju a couple of times. But the surprise was reserved for Hayden, who even at this age was able to clear World Cup hero Shivam Dube several times over the fence.

The fans were treated with a spectacular laser show. Thereafter, Paal Dabba and Asal Kolaaru sang to entertain the fans, till the maestro AR Rahman performed.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

EXPRESS READ

SA clinch 19-run win over NZ in fourth T20I

WELLINGTON: South Africa's spinners played a decisive role as the tourists won the fourth T20I against New Zealand by 19 runs on Sunday to square the five-match series 2-2. New Zealand were well placed to clinch the series midway through their chase in Wellington after the Proteas scored 164-5. However, from 88-3 after 10 overs, they lost wickets in rapid succession to be all out for 145 off 18.5 overs.

Shuttler Unnati bags Polish Open crown

CHENNAI: Youngster Unnati Hooda captured the women's singles title at the Polish Open on Sunday. The 18-year-old, who was the No 1 seed in the International Challenge, beat Polina Buhrova of Ukraine 10-21, 21-15, 21-8 in 47 minutes. She had won four games heading into the final, winning all in straight games. This is Unnati's second International Challenge title. She also has three BWF World Tour titles to her name.

Abhay and Anahat emerge champions

MUMBAI: It turned out to be a night of celebrations for Indian squash fans with local favorites Abhay Singh and Anahat Singh winning the men's and women's titles, respectively on the final day of the Indian Open 2026 at the CCI here. The men's title clash was an all-Indian battle with the Abhay beating his compatriot Veer Chotrani 3-0 (11-9, 11-8, 11-4). Anahat blew away Hana Moataz of Egypt 3-1 (11-5, 11-6, 9-11, 11-6).

Fourth world indoor pole vault title for Duplantis

TORUS (POLAND): Armand Duplantis delivered a pole vault masterclass to win a fourth world indoor title on Saturday as Josh Kerr outgunned Cole Hocker for victory in a stacked 3,000m. Switzerland's Simon Ehammer set a world record in the men's heptathlon. Duplantis totally dominated proceedings, nailing all six of his vaults with aplomb to win with a commanding best of 6.25 metres, a championship record.

Kerala Blasters part ways with head coach Catala

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

KERALA Blasters FC parted ways with head coach David Catala following a poor start to the season. The former Spanish footballer was signed by KBFC mid-season last March after the then-coach, Michael Stahre, was fired for the same reasons, and coach TG Purushothaman quit at the end of the season. The team terminated the contract due to the team's below-par show so far.

Blasters, who had a massive squad reshuffle this season, have lost five out of six games and have just one point so far this term. According to sources, another foreign coach, who has experience working at the ISL, is being considered to take up the top post.

Goa's Jhingan scores late to deny Chennaiyin

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

FC GOA'S Sandesh Jhingan scored a late goal to deny Chennaiyin FC a win in their first home game of the ongoing Indian Super League season at the JN Stadium here, on Sunday. The highly-engrossing match finished 1-1.

Having entered the tie after registering their first win of the campaign against Kerala Blasters in Kochi on March 7, Clifford Miranda's side were hoping for all three points in front of the home fans. And they were on course to doing that after Irfan Yadwad's strike in the 48th minute.

Irfan capitalised on a defensive error, kept his composure, and slotted home to give the Marina Machans a deserved lead, before continuing to trouble the Goa defence and win a corner as CFC looked to build on their advantage. Just when it seemed like Chennaiyin would get maximum points, Jhingan scored to silence the home crowd. Goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz initially did well to deny Dejan Drazic with a strong save, but Jhingan rose highest to head home from the resulting corner and level the score. Chennaiyin are in 10th position with five points while Goa are placed fifth with 10 points. The former champs will next be in action against Inter Kashi on April 7.

BFC climb to fourth spot

KOLKATA: Brian Sanchez scored a double as Bengaluru beat Inter Kashi 3-1 to move to fourth spot in the league.

Ashique Kuruniyan broke the deadlock before Inter equalised through Alfred Pnanas.

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

O'Reilly in dreamland as Man City capture League Cup

AGENCIES @ London

IT was a evening to remember for Manchester City local boy Nico O'Reilly as his double strike helped Pep Guardiola's side win the League Cup at the expense of Arsenal at Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday.

After a goalless opening 45 minutes, Man City broke the deadlock with O'Reilly scoring in the hour mark. Four minutes later, the 21-year-old, one of the rare talents to have graduated through the academy, doubled the lead. This is a much-needed boost for Man City as they look to challenge Arsenal for Premier League crown.

Araujo lifts Barcelona

BARCELONA: Ronald Araujo's header helped Barcelona extend their lead on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga to seven points with a tight 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano on Sunday. Alvaro Arbeloa's Real Madrid were scheduled to face Atletico Madrid, fourth, later (IST Monday morning) on in a derby clash.

Araujo nodded home Joao Cancelo's corner after 24 minutes to secure the three points at Camp Nou.

Spurs lose yet again

LONDON: Tottenham slipped ever closer to relegation from the Premier League with a 3-0 defeat to fellow strugglers Nottingham Forest on Sunday as Sunderland stretched their hex over local rivals Newcastle.

Goals from Igor Jesus, Morgan Gibbs-White and Taiwo Awoniyi inflicted the latest in a series of damaging defeats on interim Tottenham boss Igor Tudor. West Ham's 2-0 defeat at Aston Villa ensured Spurs remain one point outside the relegation zone with seven games remaining.

Man City's Nico O'Reilly (R) celebrates after scoring against Arsenal | AFP

PSL without fans due to West Asia conflict

AGENCIES @ Lahore

THE PCB on Sunday announced that the initial stages of the Pakistan Super League will be held without spectators due to the prevailing tense situation in the region caused by the conflict in West Asia. The competition will also only be limited to just two venues, Karachi and Lahore. "The PSL is an international brand and our pride. So, the league will be held on schedule from 26th March but no spectators will be allowed," Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB head, said. However, Naqvi downplayed any security concerns about holding the PSL.

"These decisions were taken because of the austerity measures announced by the government due to the situation in the region. I can tell you overseas players will start reaching Pakistan from tonight," Naqvi said. He also said that as part of the austerity measures, the board had cancelled the grand opening ceremony ahead of the PSL. Naqvi said the board would try to compensate the eight franchises by paying them the estimated gate money at the already announced venues.

UPCOMING EXAMINATIONS

DRDO CEPTAM-11 (TIER-1 CBT	CUET-PG	AP SET
Dates: March 23, 2026	Date: March 24, 25, 27, 2026	Date: March 28-29, 2026

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE, BEYOND EXAMS

Students get busy with entrance tests after Class 12 exams, when they should instead get ready for new college life

FOR Class 12 students, the months between board exams and the start of college seem like an extended break. Many expect to use it to rest, explore interests, or prepare for the next phase. But do students utilise this time appropriately? More importantly: can they?

The exam vortex

"My board exams ended in March, but I was writing entrance exams until June," says Sai Prem, a first-year BTech student. He appeared for multiple engineering entrance exams last year, including national, state-level, and private university tests.

For him, the cycle remained the same: appear for an exam, often in centres far from home, return, and prepare for the next one. A similar experience played out for Abhinav Suhas Koppuravuri, a first-year BBA student. Like Prem, he found himself sucked into the intense cycle of entrance exam preparation. "As a science student, I had to rely on coaching to crack exams for management programmes. Those classes shifted from once-a-week to daily after my board exams ended, so much of my time was devoted to preparation," he says.

Mind the gap

Not much time for anything else

This hectic cycle of back-to-back exams left both students with little time and even less energy to do anything else once the exams ended. Because of this, they were unable to pursue many of their initial plans for these months.

"If I were to relive those three to four months again, I would focus more on my start-up ideas. I would also network with founders and like-minded people actively," Abhinav reveals. Prem also believes that better planning could have helped him get a head start in college. "My current semester has introduced coding languages. If I had had better planning and thus more time after my board exams, I could have learned some of them," he says.

Weak support systems?

Experts argue that students often get caught in the race to clear multiple entrance exams and secure admissions to reputable colleges, largely due to a lack of adequate guidance in making informed decisions.

TAKING THESE SMALL STEPS NOW CAN MAKE THE START OF COLLEGE MUCH SMOOTHER

- **Preview Semester I** Get the first-semester syllabus from likely colleges or seniors, then learn a few basics before classes begin.
- **Talk to Seniors** Speak to two or three current students about workload, costs, campus life, and mistakes they wish they had avoided.
- **Fix the Paper Trail** Organise marksheets, IDs, photos, scans, and bank details early so admissions do not turn frantic later.
- **Build One Small Proof** Create one visible output, a project, blog, portfolio piece, or prototype, that shows interest beyond marks.
- **Practise Living Basics** Work on budgeting, email etiquette, laundry, cooking, or commuting, because college tests these quickly.

"Parents often pressure their children to pursue subjects and courses that are currently trending," says Rohit Gupta, Co-Founder and COO of College Vidya, an online platform that helps students choose colleges and universities.

"With so much information at their disposal, students are often unable to decide what career path suits them best. At the same time, parents push them to try everything," he explains. He adds that clarity can reduce the need to appear for multiple entrance exams. "Students don't have to appear for every possible exam if they know what they want," he says.

Gupta recommends career assessment tests and counselling sessions, which he says are increasingly accessible. For those who cannot avail such services, he suggests a more deliberate approach. "Don't rush into taking admission. Do your research, explore your subject through online courses or internships, and build your profile," he advises.

A jumpstart to college life

Beyond academic and professional preparation, Gupta also stresses the importance of personal development during this period.

"Students who have just finished school often think that college life is a period of fun and freedom. While that is true, they also need to realise that these freedoms come with responsibilities," he says. Without using this time effectively, students may finish college with more confusion about their future, he warns. To make better use of the gap months and prepare for the years ahead, he suggests developing discipline through daily routines. "Something as simple as waking up early can add structure to your day," he notes.

Strategy makes the difference

YECHURI SASHIKANTH

ENGINEERING remains one of the most popular career paths; every year, millions of students compete for limited seats at top institutions. The path to achieving this objective is not just about mastering concepts but also understanding the examination.

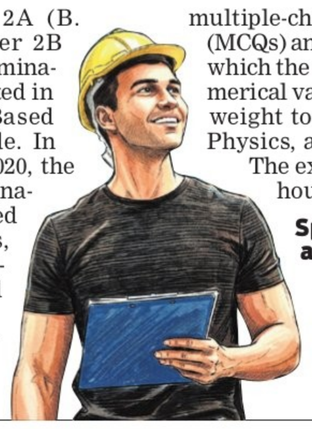
The National Testing Agency (NTA) conducts the JEE Main entrance examination in two sessions annually, in January and April. The JEE Main 2026 Session 2 exams will be held from April 2 to 9 for admission to undergraduate programmes at NITs, IIITs, Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTIs), and other institutions. Aspirants must note that JEE Main is also an eligibility test for JEE Advanced, conducted for admission to IITs.

Subjects	Number of questions		Marks
	Section A	Section B	
Math	20	05	100
Physics	20	05	100
Chemistry	20	05	100
Total	75		300

Understanding JEE Main examination scheme

The JEE Main Paper 1 (BE/BTech), Paper 2A (B.Arch), and Paper 2B (B.Planning) examinations are conducted in the Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode. In line with NEP 2020, the JEE Main examination is conducted in 13 languages, including English, Hindi, and Tamil.

JEE Main Paper 1 consists of objective type multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and questions for which the answer is a numerical value, with equal weight to Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry. The exam lasts three hours.



Speed vs accuracy

The marking scheme plays a pivotal role in determining the results. Four marks are awarded for every correct or most appropriate answer. One mark is deducted for an incorrect answer. Questions left unanswered or marked for review receive zero marks.

- Avoid the 'maximum attempts' approach.
- Spending excessive time on difficult questions is not advisable.
- Attempt to select the correct answer by eliminating other options.
- Manage time effectively across different sections.

The changing face of volunteering in India

SOHAM MITRA

THE scope of volunteering in India has widened, opening channels for social engagement and community-building across multiple areas. Given the country's diverse population and developmental needs, volunteers can emerge as efficient agents of service delivery and community growth, contributing across formats that range from structured, long-term engagements to more flexible and accessible avenues of participation.

Individuals can take up long-term commitments through fellowships or NGO partnerships, or engage in short-term, event-based tasks such as campaigns and drives. Online volunteering has expanded the scope, enabling people to contribute remotely through online classes or content creation. Skill-based volunteering enables professionals to use expertise in areas such as law, technology, or healthcare. Corporate volunteering, driven by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is also gaining ground, encouraging employees to participate in community initiatives. Individuals can take up volunteering work in the education sector by teaching underprivileged students, mentoring them, and promoting digital literacy. Teach For India and Pratham are among the key programmes focused on improving learning outcomes in underserved communities. Healthcare is another important domain, comprising awareness campaigns, blood donation camps, and support during public health crises.

Environmental volunteering has also come into the limelight through activities such as tree plantation and waste management, with the support of initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. In addition, volunteers contribute to rural development, disaster relief, and social justice through organisations such as Goonj.

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MONDAY

DAY'S DIARY

Shaheed Diwas

Indian freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Hari Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar were hanged by the British in 1931

SIGNIFICANCE

Shaheed Diwas alias Martyrs' Day, serves as a day of remembrance and a tribute to the brave hearts who laid down their lives for India's Independence

LAHORE CONSPIRACY CASE

On April 8, 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt hurled bombs in the Central Assembly Hall in Delhi, and raised the slogan of 'Inquilab Zindabad!'

COURT RULING

Twenty-one individuals were arrested, including Sukhdev and Shivaram. They were convicted in favour of a life sentence

Beat your Monday blues with these city events!

PG 2

RAPPORT OFF BEAT

Artistes, music lovers and legal experts weigh in on the resurfaced *Enjoy Enjaami* dispute of credit and collaboration between music composer Santhosh Narayanan and rapper Arivu

'Featured artiste' tag can downplay key contributions

There's a possibility that 'exposure' might have been the understanding behind the scenes. When a song achieves success, crediting and rewarding people becomes essential. Not doing so can leave artistes feeling insecure. We are all artistes trying to create something meaningful, so relying purely on rational contracts can feel limiting. Even the 'featured artiste' tag can sometimes downplay key contributions. Everyone involved, from the sound engineer to the main artiste, deserves the credit they have earned.

— **Poorav,** rapper

ANJALI RAM

A viral song, a public fallout and a question that refuses to go away even after half a decade – who really owns a hit! The controversy around the 2021 song *Enjoy Enjaami* has brought composer Santhosh Narayanan and rapper-lyricist Arivu back into the spotlight, after a comment on X from a fan stating singer Dhee and Santhosh Narayanan 'stole' the song from Arivu, reignited the debate, with both sides offering sharply different accounts of credit and compensation. While Arivu has raised concerns over recognition and royalties, Narayanan has challenged these claims, calling the former 'dishonest' and 'delusional'. The issue has drawn attention to how collaborations are structured and whether existing practices fairly account for every contributor's role in a song's success. Bengalureans, including musicians, experts and music lovers, share their views as *CE* take a closer look at the matter.

Santhosh Narayanan

Singer Dhee and rapper Arivu

Arivu feels under-credited

Santhosh is the composer and producer, so technically, the final ownership and credit usually goes to him. But if Arivu actually wrote the lyrics and contributed so much to the core of the song, then he definitely deserved more recognition than just being called a 'featuring artiste'. Hence, even if legally, Santhosh might be right, creatively, Arivu feels under-credited. And the industry does lean towards established composers or producers since they control most of the process, while independent artistes don't always get the same visibility. Santhosh's response felt transparent, but also a bit defensive. It seems like a larger issue where credit doesn't always match contribution.

— **Anjana K,** sales specialist and music aficionado

Santhosh asking for clarity is valid

If someone is claiming they're not getting royalties as per their contribution, then the proof is in the pudding. We can look at the numbers and resolve it by the books. Ideally, this should have remained an internal matter, but since it's in public, asking for clarity is valid; hence, Santhosh challenging it is fair. If you're not getting the revenue, then show where the money is going so the issue can be resolved. Someone like Santhosh has a long track record in the industry – if there were consistent issues, it would have come out by now. I don't think it's unfair for him to ask these questions to Arivu, especially since the claims were made publicly. That said, there are power dynamics and complexities at play. It's a 'he said, he said' situation.

— **Kev,** singer-songwriter

Santhosh Narayanan publicly challenging the claim shows he's confident in his POV

Internally, creative processes are messy and layered because creativity is spontaneous. It isn't always predictable, and sometimes people end up contributing far more than what was initially defined. In those cases, there should be space for honest conversations and a willingness to revisit those agreements if needed. But Santhosh Narayanan publicly challenging the claims shows he's confident in his POV. The composer's vision plays a huge role – it literally sets the emotional direction of the track. While a song comes alive when the singer adds their own texture and emotion, the foundation, however, comes from the composer.

— **Roshni Ghosh,** singer

Issue points to label accountability failure

What appears to be a creator-versus-creator dispute points to a larger label accountability failure. While Santhosh has stated that the net income for all artistes was 'zero cents', the royalties question points squarely at Maajja (the record label which released *Enjoy Enjaami*). If none of the artistes has seen revenue, they are in the same boat. Apart from the fact that the song itself credits Arivu as 'songwriter', Santhosh has also acknowledged that Arivu wrote almost all the lyrics and performed the song. However, he has also confirmed that no contract was ever signed with Maajja, which means the evidentiary gaps cut across all artistes involved. In the absence of documentation, no verbal promise of revenue sharing is enforceable, meaning even a successful song may not translate into earnings.

— **Sandhya Surendran,** media & entertainment lawyer

This appears to be a contractual or structural misunderstanding

At a preliminary level, this appears more indicative of a contractual or structural misunderstanding rather than a clear-cut rights violation. The practical ability to exercise these rights depends on proper credit attribution and underlying documentation. Public statements during an ongoing dispute are often counterproductive, and disputes of this nature are best resolved through confidential negotiations or structured legal processes. Factors like caste or social background are a reality in different spheres of life and can, in a broader sense, influence access, negotiations, networks and opportunities. While these are important conversations at a broader level, any particular dispute needs to be approached through objective legal principles and verifiable evidence.

— **Ashwin Sathish Nair,** artist-entertainment lawyer

CITY READ

Vegan market to return to city with 18th edition

Namu Recommends Vegan Market is set to return to Bengaluru with its 18th edition from 12pm to 8pm on March 28 and 29 at Chamara Vajra, Jayamahal Main Road. Bringing together 130 vegan and sustainable brands from across India, the pet-friendly market will offer a mix of food, fashion, wellness and home essentials. Expect everything from refreshing vegan popsicles and indulgent desserts to upcycled fashion, plant-based nutrition and eco-friendly products. Entry to the event is free. For details, call 91482 53622.

University hosts startup mela in city

St Joseph University's Entrepreneurship Development Cell and Institution's Innovation Council recently held a startup mela with the theme 'Connect. Convert. Catalyst', aimed to encourage students to develop ideation, problem-solving and startup-building skills. Students received feedback from investors and industry leaders. Also featured were two high-impact panel discussions designed to help students convert their academic knowledge into professional expertise. The event saw 6,000 attendees register and featured 22 startups. Kishor Jagirdar, president of the Vision Karnataka Foundation and chairman and managing director of Infopace Management, inaugurated the event and stressed the role of mentorship and networking in developing student-led ideas into ventures.

ASLAM GAFOOR

(The writer is a Bengaluru-based hospitality professional, food lover and travel enthusiast)

As a series of immersive dining events unfold across B'luru this month, the city is turning meals into performances, highlighting how people are into dining that feels engaging and memorable

Dining as Theatre

BENGALURU'S dining scene has never been short on innovation; yet, in the coming weeks, the city will host a set of experiences that stretch the very definition of a meal. Moving well beyond the plate, these formats weave together storytelling, performance and setting, creating occasions where food becomes part of a larger, more evocative narrative. At the heart of this shift is a growing appetite for experiential dining, where mood, context and emotional engagement carry as much weight as the cuisine itself.

The most visually striking of the lot is Le Petit Chef, currently underway at Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park. A global concept that has travelled through cities such as Paris, London and Dubai, it transforms the dining table into a theatrical stage through 3D projection mapping. A six-inch animated chef appears on each diner's plate, embarking on a playful culinary journey before each course is presented in real time. The menu mirrors this theatricality, with dishes such as ratatouille cannelloni, grilled Roman artichoke with burrata, Atlantic king prawn with lemon persillade, and coconut and jaggery créme brûlée. Multiple menu formats, including wine-paired options, start at ₹4,599 plus taxes. With fixed show formats and limited seating, advance reservations are essential.

If Le Petit Chef is driven by visual spectacle, Decked Out at Lapis: The Oscars Edition at The Oberoi Bengaluru offers a more narrative-led experience. Scheduled for March 27, the evening is helmed by chef Anirban Dasgupta and Mumbai-based Priyanko Sarkar, drawing inspiration from Oscar-winning films. Each dish is conceived as a tribute to a film, with references to titles such as *Slumdog Millionaire*, *The Godfather* and *Parasite*. Dishes start at ₹650 plus taxes, while cocktails, priced at ₹1,450 plus taxes, bring cinematic moments to life through flavour-driven creations. With limited seating on the Lapis Deck, reservations are strongly advised.

Adding a global chef-led dimension to the line-up is Chef Jason McKinney's Elizabeth World Supper Club Tour, arriving at Le Cirque Signature at The Leela Palace Bengaluru for a two-night residency on March 26 and 27.

Hosted in collaboration with The Hedonist, the experience offers an intimate chef's table preview of McKinney's upcoming Restaurant Elizabeth, set to open in the United States in 2027. A classically trained chef with stints at acclaimed kitchens such as The French Laundry, Maison Pic, and Gaggan, McKinney brings a globally informed perspective to Bengaluru. Across the menu, diners will encounter a subtle interplay of global techniques with local ingredients. The experience is priced at ₹8,850 onwards, and is designed as an intimate, reservation-only forma

paChaak has been pioneering food theatre in India. Their current production, The New India Lodge, is staged in a century-old colonial building in Cox Town and offers perhaps the most immersive interpretation of dining as narrative. Set in the 1950s, the experience brings together around 20 guests as fellow travellers in a heritage lodge. Over the course of a four to five-course meal, diners encounter characters and stories while sampling regional dishes that explore the idea of freedom in a young nation. Shows run with dinner on Fridays and lunch and dinner sittings over the weekend, with upcoming dates on March 27, 28 and 29, and additional weekends expected through April. The bookings are available online.

Whether through technology-driven spectacle, cinematic storytelling, open-air dining or immersive food theatre, Bengaluru's culinary landscape is evolving rapidly. The future of dining lies not merely in sustenance or indulgence, but in immersive storytelling, where every element, from plate to place, becomes part of the performance.

(From left) Actor Hema Choudhary shares a light moment with Honorary Consul General of Ireland in Bengaluru Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw; a musical event being held as part of the Irish National Day celebrations | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

Former Infosys CFO Mohandas Pai

DUBLIN SOIRÉE

Belated St Patrick's Day celebrations on Sunday brought the city's Irish community & diplomats together

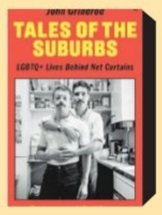
THE city marked St Patrick's Day (March 17), honouring Ireland's heritage and cultural pride, with a lively brunch at the Prince of Wales Lawn, Taj West End, on Sunday. Hosted by Kevin Kelly, Ambassador of Ireland to India, and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Honorary Consul General of Ireland in Bengaluru, who has served in the post since 2001, completing 25 consecutive years in this role. The annual event brought together diplomats, guests and members of the Irish community. The celebration featured easy conversations, festive bites and a relaxed mood. Marking St Patrick's Day, the gathering also highlighted the growing ties between India and Ireland.

Kevin Kelly, Ambassador of Ireland to India, and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw with a gift presented to her at the event

Anne Cremers, Deputy Consul General of the Kingdom of The Netherlands in South India

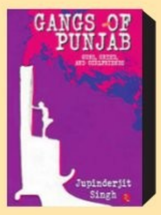
Chandru Iyer, British Deputy High Commissioner for Karnataka, with his wife Sonal Iyer

BOOK NOOK



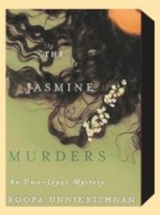
Tales Of The Suburbs
By John Grindrod

A fantastically entertaining alternative history of queer life in Britain, which departs from the usual tales of city-based freedom and discovery to tell the stories of people who grew up in the suburbs.



Gangs Of Punjab
By Jupinderjit Singh

A story of a ruthless underworld, tracing the rise of men who blur the line between outlaw and icon. Their rise comes at a deadly price, leaving behind a trail of bodies; but their fall is as dramatic and often fatal, sometimes at the hands of close confidantes.



The Jasmine Murders: An Uma-Jayan Mystery
By Roopa Unnikrishnan

When Uma moves to Manamadurai, a dismal backwater town, with her husband, Jayan, who has been posted there as the police chief, she is immediately uneasy.

Rebel English Academy
By Mohammed Hanif

When a major Pakistani political figure is hanged, OK Town erupts in protest. A few miles away, Sir Baghi is surprised by a knock at the door of the Rebel English Academy, his tuition center that offers affordable English lessons.

TWINKLE TWINKLE LIL' STARS

Pre-kindergarten students shine on stage during the annual day celebration of Presidency School, Nandini Layout | **SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA**

QUICKFIX

VANILLA FRUIT CUSTARD

INGREDIENTS

- **Makhana:** 12 - 15
- **Almonds (soaked and peeled):** 12-15
- **Hot milk :** 1 and 1/4 cups
- **Vanilla extract :** 1 tsp
- **Honey/maple syrup :** 2 tbsp
- **Cashews :** 15-18
- **Saffron strands :** 1/2 tbsp
- **Fruits and nuts of choice**

METHOD

- Add makhanas, cashews, almonds, saffron and vanilla to boiling milk. Soak them for one to two hours.
- Blend until creamy, and refrigerate it till chilled.
- Add preferred chopped fruits and nuts (eg. Apple, banana, pomegranate, cashews, raisins).
- Add honey or maple syrup, and serve it chilled!

Contributed by **Saily Chilap,** Mumbai

DR VIVEK ARORA

The expert is a senior veterinarian, Crown Vet, Delhi.

My 3-weeks-old adopted puppy follows me everywhere, even to the bathroom, and cries when I leave the room. Is this healthy attachment or early separation anxiety? How to fix this?

At three-weeks-old, it's normal for a puppy to follow you everywhere and cry when left alone. At this stage, puppies are building bonds. They depend on warmth and security, so this behavior indicates healthy attachment rather than separation anxiety. To prevent issues later, start with short, gentle periods of separation and ensure she has a safe, cosy space with toys or a soft bed. Avoid scolding clinginess and instead reward calm, independent behaviour. Early socialisation with people, other pets and new environments will help her become confident and reduce anxiety as she grows.

ASK AN XPERT

FITBIT

WHY BASIC EXERCISE IS CRUCIAL FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Most people think they need intense workouts to stay fit. That's not true. Even simple, regular movement makes a big difference. Basic exercise keeps your body active, improves your health and helps you feel better through the day.

- **HOW IT HELPS YOUR HEART:** Your heart needs movement to stay strong. Activities like walking, cycling or even dancing improve blood flow and make your heart work more efficiently. Over time, this lowers your risk of heart disease. Exercise also helps manage cholesterol. It increases the good cholesterol and reduces the bad one. This keeps your arteries clear and lowers the chances of heart-related issues.
- **WHY IT MATTERS FOR METABOLISM:** Metabolism is how your body uses energy. When you stay active, your body burns more calories, even when you're not working out. Adding simple strength exercises helps build muscle. More muscle means your body uses more energy at rest. Even small habits like taking the stairs or standing more often help keep your metabolism active.
- **LONG-TERM HEALTH BENEFITS:** Regular exercise reduces the risk of conditions like diabetes, obesity and heart problems. It also improves your mental health. When you move, your body releases chemicals that help reduce stress and improve your mood. It also helps you sleep better and keeps your mind sharp as you age.
- **CONSISTENCY MATTERS MORE THAN INTENSITY:** You don't need to overdo it. What matters is showing up regularly. A short walk every day is better than one intense workout in a week. Pick activities you enjoy so that you stick to them. Set small goals and build from there.

Exercise does not have to be complicated. Move a little every day. Stay consistent. Over time, these small efforts build a stronger, healthier body.

By Dhruva Sivakumar, fitness expert, cult — a fitness and wellness platform

EXPRESS CONNECT

HAVE A RECIPE OR ART WORK TO SHARE, OR A QUESTION TO ASK?

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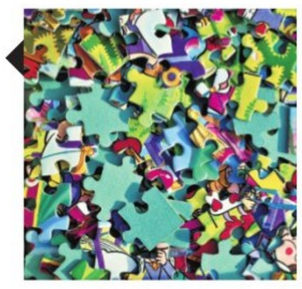
WHATWHENWHYWHERE

Mind Games



Trade screens for scenes of strategy and dive into jigsaw puzzles, speed puzzles and interactive games in a relaxed social setting. Meet like-minded enthusiasts and collaborate or compete at your own pace.

WHEN: March 23, 6.30pm
WHERE: Underline Center, Domlur
DETAILS: district.in

Toast and Tales

Indulge in an English breakfast that feels like comfort on a plate, any time of day. From eggs and toast to sausages and baked beans, every bite is hearty and satisfying. Pair it with a warm coffee, slow down and savour the moment.

WHEN: March 24, 11am
WHERE: Urban Solace Cafe, Ulsoor
CALL : 98450 13055

Aim and focus

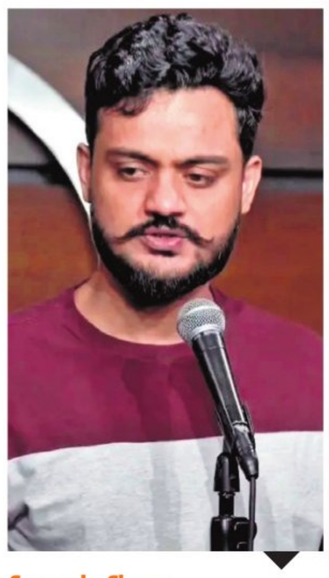
Train with precision, focus and discipline and learn how to shoot like a champion. Join these structured training programs and begin your journey into professional shooting with expert guidance.

WHEN: March 24, 8.30am
WHERE: Ziel Shooting Academy, HSR Layout
CALL : 78290 51234

Stable Thrills

Get introduced to the basics and experience the thrill of horse riding under expert guidance. A unique activity that builds strength, focus and confidence, open to all ages and skill levels.

WHEN: March 23, 4.15pm
WHERE: Bengaluru Turf Club, Race Course Road
CALL : 80222 62391



Comedy Chaos

Experience a night of laughter with Siddhartha Agrawal and Rishabh Kanishka delivering sharp, relatable comedy. The show promises to bring out the humour in city life paired with witty observations.

WHEN: March 23, 8pm
WHERE: TAG Comedy club, Koramangala
CALL: 90191 33053

Breathe Energy

Step into a refreshing yoga experience that blends movement, play and mindfulness. Each day brings a new twist from chair yoga to aerial flows. It is designed to energise your body while calming your mind.

WHEN: March 23, 8am
WHERE: Mushroom studio, Haralur
DETAILS: bookmyshow.com

ARTCORNER

THE CRIMSON GLOW

Mayur Gupta makes a sculpture featuring arches painted in black and red — appearing as if each arch reflects its own story

PUNCH GOT PUNCHIER

The Punch.ev was already popular. However, Tata has surprised the market by increasing its power and range while reducing the price. Here's a look at the new model

LEKSHMI C PILLAI

TATA Motors has been striving to maintain its top position in India's electric car market. While the electric version of its micro-SUV, the Punch, is already gaining popularity, Tata has now surprised the market by increasing its power and range while simultaneously reducing the price. The Punch.ev now comes in a different but better package.

DESIGN

Punch.ev has adopted a minimalistic look, removing 'luxury' flourishes like the front connecting light bar and certain plastic panels. There is only a narrow black plastic band that connects the headlamps.

The bumper is now a very clean panel. The test-driven top variant has LED headlamps and daytime running lights. The plastic claddings on doors are now grey. The rear is an exact replica of the petrol version, with connected tail lamps.

Under the hood, components like the motor, gear, and power converter are packed into a single, compact drive unit. This helped the company to save on wiring, semiconductors, packaging and more. There is a lot of space and the customer can go for a frunk or front trunk, which is sold as an accessory.

The cabin has not changed much from the outgoing version, but for the colour theme. Now it's grey themed.

The new model boasts high-quality displays with excellent clarity, including a 10.25-inch infotainment screen, 10.25-inch digital instrument cluster, a 360-degree camera and a blind-spot view monitor.

It also comes loaded with features such as front seat ventilation, a sunroof and an electronic parking brake.

Most physical buttons for the AC have been replaced by a touch-enabled panel with toggle switches for temperature and fan speed. However, the touch panel's glossy nature makes it annoyingly reflective at times.

The infotainment suite supports third-party apps for music, podcasts and even OTT video content. It also supports wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay.

The driver's display is now more capable, allowing for full-screen navigation maps to be mirrored directly behind the steering wheel.

The blind spot monitor feed is also integrated into the digital cockpit (MID) for better line-of-sight while driving.

One of the most tactile upgrades is the introduction of 'iToggle' window controls. The traditional plastic buttons have been replaced by slim, metal-finish toggle switches that feel more solid and premium. The 90 degree door opening also makes many things easier. Seats are supportive and comfy, and front seat ventilation also works very well.

POWERTRAIN

Though there is a price cut, passenger amenities and performance have actually been upgraded. The previous 25kWh and 35kWh battery packs have been replaced with 30kWh and 40kWh versions, respectively. By switching from cylindrical to prismatic cells, Tata managed to fit more cells into the same space, increasing capacity.

Motor power: Increased by 7hp, now offering 88hp and 129hp variants.

Torque: 154 Nm for both battery pack models.

THE DRIVE

The Punch.ev delivers power smoothly. It features Eco, City and Sport drive modes, along with four regenerative braking levels that can be easily adjusted via paddle shifters.

The difference between drive modes is easily noticeable. The default city mode is well-suited for all normal needs. The car is both city and highway friendly. To help lower the cost, the company determined that disc brakes were unnecessary for the rear wheels, replacing them with drum brakes. But it has retained the electronic parking brake. It includes an auto-hold function, which is particularly useful in stop-and-go city traffic. The braking power is not compromised either. The suspension is also passenger-friendly.

The company claims a real-world range of 355km for the larger battery pack model, and it is expected to comfortably cross the 300km mark, going by the test drive experience. The company assures that a 15-minute fast charge can provide a range of 135km. That takes away much of the range anxiety.

THE VERDICT

The new Punch.ev is a clever package that offers good value for money. With the price of the top variant down by ₹1.35 lakh, the new model packs more punch than ever before. Now, the price band is from ₹9.69 lakh to ₹12.59 lakh.

The writer is a freelance auto expert who hosts TV shows and anchors the YouTube channel 'CARKADUVA'

Mercedes-Benz announces CLA 200 'Standard Range'

Mercedes-Benz announced the addition of a new variant, the CLA 200 'Standard Range', for its upcoming launch of the CLA BEV in India. The CLA 200 'Standard Range' will be in addition to the CLA 250+ 'Long Range' variant. The variant will feature comfort seats, a multifunction sports leather steering wheel and two trim options. Bookings can be made with a payment of ₹1.5 lakh. Prices will be announced in April.

New Hyundai VERNA

Hyundai Motor India has announced a new Verna at an attractive price, with more than 25 enhancements across design, technology, safety and comfort. New exterior and interior styling now sports two new colours – classy blue and titan grey matte. New Verna is the segment's widest sedan with the longest wheelbase. A driver memory seat, rear-window sunshade, and smart trunk with the largest boot space of 528 litres are added for the first time in the segment. The starting price is ₹10.98 lakh.

NEW RELEASE

Meteor 350 sales cross 6 lakh

Royal Enfield's most-loved mid-size cruiser, the Meteor 350, has crossed the 6 lakh sales milestone globally since its launch in November 2020. The Meteor 350 is powered by a 349cc air-oil-cooled, single-cylinder engine that delivers smooth, tractable power with a refined character. It is offered in four distinct variants – Fireball, Stellar, Aurora and Supernova, with ex-showroom prices ranging between ₹1.95 lakh and ₹2.15 lakh.

Mahindra XEV 9e Cineluxe Edition

Mahindra unveiled the XEV 9e Cineluxe Edition, a more indulgent interpretation of its flagship electric origin SUV. Every surface, texture and detail has been curated to elevate the in-cabin experience. It comes in two exterior colours – satin black or satin white – paired with chestnut brown and nocturne black smooth-grain leatherette interiors. Built on the top-of-the-line Pack Three variant, the XEV 9e Cineluxe Edition is powered by a 79 kWh battery delivering over 500 km of real-world range. It is priced at ₹29.35 lakh, ex-showroom. Bookings are open.

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PUBLIC NOTICE
CHANGE OF NAME

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **KALPANA SHETTI** (Old name), aged about 38 years W/o **ROHITH SHANKARA SHETTY** Residing at No. 55 3RD FLOOR 2ND CROSS, PILLAMMA BLOCK SRIRAMPURAM, Bengaluru have changed my name to **KALPANA SHETTY** (new name) vide affidavit dated: 20/3/2026 before Notary **Mohammed Hussain.K** Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, (OLD NAME) BINOD MADATHIPARAMBIL @ BINDO M @ BINDO MENON S/o K. Parameswara Menon, Residing at No.4/A, Chik Bazar Road, 1st Cross Road, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru-560051, have changed my Name from **(OLD NAME) BINOD MADATHIPARAMBIL @ BINDO M @ BINDO MENON to (NEW NAME) BINOD MENON M.,** Vide affidavit dated 18.03.2026 sworn before Notary Meer Hassan, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SIVA NAGARAJU BORRA Father of BORRA DHANUSH BABU presently residing of No.5, Thalaghattapura, BWSSB Quarters Back Side, Kanakapura Main Road, Thalaghattapura, Bengaluru-560 109, Karnataka, India, do hereby declare that my son name changed from **BORRA DHANUSH BABU** to **BORRA DHANUSH,** vide affidavit dated 18-03-2026 sworn before notary H G Padmanabha Rao Padmanabhanagar, Bengaluru.

AFFIDAVIT

I, **Smt. Bhagyamma**, W/o. Channapillaiah, D/o. Munibairappa @ Chikkabyrappa, Aged about 59 years, Residing at No. 342, 2nd Block, Somanahalli, Kanakapura Road, Bangalore - 560 082, do hereby declare that, my father correct name as **Munibairappa** before the schools which I was studied 1st standard to 7th standard at Govt. Higher Primary School at Somanahalli, Bangalore South Taluk and further 8th Std studied at APS RHS Somanahalli, Bangalore South Taluk by mistake and oversight of the school authorities are recorded as **Smt. Bhagyamma D/o Sri. Muninanjappa.** Infact Sri. Muninanjappa is my Grandfather name. I state that, my all records and Documents my father name stands in the name of **MUNIBAIRAPPA.** Vide affidavit dated 10.03.2026 sworn before Chethana S.V., Advocate & Notary Public, Govt. of India, Bengaluru.

AFFIDAVIT

I, **POOJA SHYAM GUPTA,** aged about 32 years, W/o. Sajal Suhane, residing at Flat A-310, GRC ShreeKrish, Sy No.46, MJ Nagar Road, Anekal Taluk, Choodasandra, Huskur, Dist: Bengaluru, Karnataka-560099. I state that my name is mentioned in Aadhar Card & Pan Card as **POOJA SHYAM GUPTA** & in Passport my name is mentioned as **POOJA GUPTA,** Hereby declare that, above said names are one and the same & it refers to me only, hereinafter I will be called and known as **"POOJA SHYAM GUPTA"** only. Vide Affidavit dated 21.03.2026, Sworn before Advocate and Notary B.M. Chandrashekar, Bangalore.

LOST

LOST OF DOCUMENTS

Suwarna Dadabhau Dhaykar D/O Dadabhau Dhaykar, House no. 21, Mahada Colony, Pachod Road Ambad, Ambad, Jalna, Maharashtra-431204. Inform that Original D Pharmacy 2nd Year Mark Sheet have been lost. Certificate Registration No. A863215 FIR no. 2106165/2026. If anyone find the documents please contact Mr. Sidharth Janrao-7083350707

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **MADHURI MALLIKARJUNA** W/o **Sandeep Gopalakrishnan** R/at No.14 Gokula 1st Main Madakari Nayaka Road Yerranapalya Bengaluru - 560016 have changed my name to **MADHURI MALLIKARJUNAREDDY** vide affidavit dated: 21/3/2026 before Notary **K.V.Mani** Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

We, LAKSHMIKANTH M SATISH, S/o. L Murthy Naidu, aged about 49 years, and Smt. Lakshmi J, W/o. Lakshmikanth M Satish, aged about 45 years, both are R/a No. 1133/11, 15th 'C' Cross, Next to Shaakya Elite Apt, Chandra Layout, Nagarabhavi 1st Stage, 1st Block, Bengaluru-560072, have changed Our Daughter name from **PRAGYA L** to **PRAGYA L NAIDU** vide affidavit Dated 16/03/2026 sworn to before Notary S.Eswara Reddy, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHRIKANT RAMANATH ANAVATTI, Presently residing at Flat No.B0807, 8th Floor, Brigade Komarla Heights, Chikkalasandra, Subramanyapura Post, Bengaluru-560061, Karnataka, India, do here by declare that my name is changed from **SHRIKANT RAMANATH ANAVATTI** to **SRIKANT ANAVATTI** vide affidavit dated 18-03-2026 sworn before notary H G PADMANABHA RAO, Padmanabhanagar, Bengaluru.

AFFIDAVIT

I, **JNANI RAM.**, aged about 56 years, S/o. Jahur Ram, residing at No.246, 3rd Cross, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore 560 058, hereby declare that **JNANI RAM and GYANI PRASAD** Both the names belong to one and the same person i.e., myself only. And continue my name in future as **JNANI RAM** vide affidavit dated: 06.03.2026 before Advocate and Notary K S Bammappanavar, Bangalore

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **PRITI GHOSHAL** (New Name) previously called **PRITI VISHWAKARMA** date of birth is 01/05/1990, W/o. Jayanta Kumar Ghoshal, R/at: No. B-30, Shrishti Sanskriti. Beside Housing Board Colony, Parsada, Post - Bharni, Kota Road, Bilaspur, Chattisgarh-495112, presently residing at Flat No. L-1069, Tranquil, @Brigade Cornerstone Utopia, Varthur-Gunjur Main Road, Varthur, Bangalore-560087. Hereby declare that, I have changed my name from **'PRITI VISHWAKARMA'** to **'PRITI GHOSHAL',** Vide Affidavit dated 21.03.2026, Sworn before Advocate and Notary A.M. Rajasekar, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **PRADEEP KUMAR. R** S/o **RAMAKRISHNAPPA. H M** R/at No 31. 1st Main. 2nd Cross Hulimavu Bannergatta Road Bengaluru- 560076 have changed my name to **PRADEEP KUMAR.H.R** vide affidavit dated: 21/3/2026 before Notary **Mohammed Hussain.K** Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

We, LAKSHMIKANTH M SATISH, S/o. L Murthy Naidu, aged about 49 years, and Smt. Lakshmi J, W/o. Lakshmikanth M Satish, aged about 45 years, both are R/a No. 1133/11, 15th 'C' Cross, Next to Shaakya Elite Apt, Chandra Layout, Nagarabhavi 1st Stage, 1st Block, Bengaluru-560072, have changed Our Son name from **BHARGAV L** to **BHARGAV L NAIDU** vide affidavit Dated 16/03/2026 sworn to before Notary S.Eswara Reddy, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SUNANDA SHRIKANT, Presently residing at Flat No.B0807, 8th Floor, Brigade Komarla Heights, Chikkalasandra, Subramanyapura Post, Bengaluru-560061, Karnataka, India, do hereby declare that my name is changed from SUNANDA SHRIKANT to SUNANDA ANAVATTI vide affidavit dated 18-03-2026 sworn before notary H G PADMANABHA RAO, Padmanabhanagar, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SMITA SURESH GOWDA** W/o Mr.Suresh Gowda aged about 37 years, resident of Flat.A301, Block A, Saroj Dynasty, Doddakannalli, Bellandur Road Bengaluru - 560035, hereby declare that my father's name **NAIDU DURAJRAJ and NAIDU DURAIRAJ** Both the names belong to one and the same person i.e., my father's name only. And continue my father's name in future as **DURAIRAJ NAIDU** vide affidavit dated: 20.03.2026 before Advocate and Notary B.M. Chandrashekar, Bangalore

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Anirudh Sridhar Bharadwaj, S/o Thiruvengadathan Sridharan, permanent resident of D 515, Jal Vayu Vihar, Kammanahalli Main Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka, 560043, presently residing at 434 Minna St Apt 1912, San Francisco, CA 94103, USA hereby notify that I have changed my name from **Anirudh Sridhar Bharadwaj** to **Anirudh Bharadwaj**. Sworn before Antonio Locatelli, Notary Public, San Francisco Country, California vide affidavit dated 18.03.2026.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SHANAVAS MOHAMMED ISMAIL** S/o **Mohamed Ismail,** R/at No 25A Silver Springs Layout Sacred hearts Road, TC Palya Main Road TC Palya, KR Puram Bangalore- 560036, have changed my name to **SHANAVAS** vide affidavit dated: 20/3/2026 Before Notary **K.V.mani** Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SHASHIKALA R**, W/o Mr. Inderpal Singh residing at VG-022, Pruksa Silvana, Nimbekaipura Road, Budigere Cross, Bommenahalli, Bangalore - 560049, have changed my name **SHASHIKALA R** to **SIMRAN KAUR** and also my religion from Hinduism to Sikhism hereafter be known as **SIMRAN KAUR** vide affidavit dated 24.02.2026 sworn before A.R. Muneer Ahmed, Advocate & Notary Govt. of India, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **S HAJIRA**, Wife of S Masthan Vali, Aged about 33 years, Presently residing at Flat No. 205, 2nd Floor, SVP Sunrise Apartment, Spring Dale Layout, Vijayanagara, Whitefield, Bangalore - 560 066, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from **S HAZEERA** to **S HAJIRA** vide affidavit dated 20.03.2026 sworn before Yankoba, Advocate & Notary Public, Govt. of India, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **PANDE KIRANMYEE** (New Name) previously called **VEMULA KIRANMYEE, VEMULA KIRANMAI** date of birth is 30/07/1997, W/o. Pande Bala Mahesh, presently address at Flat No. A-101, Whistling Winds, Gunjur, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore-560087. Hereby declare that, I have changed my name from **'VEMULA KIRANMYEE, VEMULA KIRANMAI'** to **'PANDE KIRANMYEE',** Vide Affidavit dated 21.03.2026, Sworn before Advocate and Notary A.M. Rajasekar, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, VISHALAKSHI VENKATASWAMY residing at Karnataka at No. 7, 4th main, Deshaabandhu Nagar, Krishna Temple Road, Doddabommasandra, Vidyaranyapura, Bengaluru - 560097, have changed my name from **VISHALAKSHI SANTHOSH KUMAR NARAYANAPPA** to **VISHALAKSHI VENKATASWAMY,** vide affidavit dated 18/3/2026 sworn to before Varija C J Advocate and Notary Bangalore.

PUSHKARA EYES A BIGGER CANVAS WITH *VIJAYANAGARA SAMRAJYA*

The producer of *Godhi Banna Sadharana Mykattu*, who is now taking on multiple roles as writer, director, and actor, says they are embracing virtual production, a first for Kannada cinema

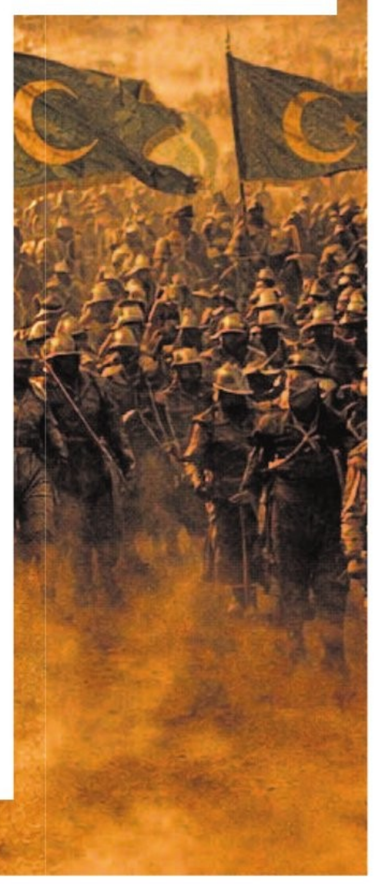
A still from the film

Pushkara Mallikarjunaiah

A SHARADHAA

PUSHKARA Mallikarjunaiah, the producer behind films like *Godhi Banna Sadharana Mykattu and Avane Srimannarayana*, and most recently *Avatara Purusha*, is stepping into ambitious territory with *Vijayanagara Samrajya*. The film is a period epic rooted in the rise and fall of one of India's greatest empires. After a brief pause from production, Pushkara returns to what he calls "a dream long in the making," this time taking on multiple responsibilities as writer, director, actor, and producer under Pushkar Films. "It is a matter of pride to talk about our kings and our land," Pushkar says, adding, "After Dr Rajkumar, very few have attempted stories set against such a strong historical backdrop. This is my humble effort."

Having completed 22 days of its initial schedule, the film traces the might of the Vijayanagar Empire, leading up to its tragic fall after the Battle of Talikota in 1565. Pushkar also introduces an additional narrative thread, a mystery surrounding a lost treasure believed to have been looted by the Mughals and hidden in Hampi. "The story blends contemporary elements with history, mythology, and imagination. It is not just a period film. It explores a divine connection to our past," he explains. Planned as a two-part saga, the film is backed by nearly five years of research. Pushkar reveals that he spent close to a year in Hampi, working with historians, studying local folklore, and immersing himself in the landscape. "I temporarily camped there to understand the place beyond textbooks," he says. "Part one touches upon Goddess Parvati's significance to the region, while part two will explore the lore around Lord Hanuman."Pushkara is now aiming for what he calls a "Rs 100 crore canvas. I am actively seeking collaborations with larger studios to mount the film on a pan-Indian scale. This is not a small attempt. I want it to stand as an epic from Indian cinema," he notes. Shot partly on location in Hampi and partly on elaborate sets, the film has already completed a 22-day schedule. While Pushkar has kept many details under wraps, he will appear in a historical get-up and take on multiple characters. "I play a treasure hunter, but I also have multiple roles to portray," he reveals. Cinematographer Vinod is on board, while casting for key roles is currently underway. "More importantly, this film will be mounted using virtual production for the first time in the Kannada industry. I have spent nearly two years exploring this technology," he says. Pushkar is particularly keen on bringing a major star to portray Krishnadevaraya. "Krishnadevaraya is the pride and glory of Vijayanagara, the king of kings. That role needs a towering presence," he adds. For Pushkara, wearing multiple hats as writer, director, and actor is less a challenge and more a necessity. "If you have a vision, you must also become the director who can realise it. This is a story I have dreamt for years. Now, it is time to bring it alive."



Shruti and Sudhir Attaavar's *Koragajja* goes 3D

Trivikram Sapalya, producer of Trivikram Cinemas and Success Films, confirmed that the film will be released in both 2D and 3D

CE FEATURES

Director Sudhir Attaavar's *Koragajja* has made a big move with the announcement that the film is being developed in 3D. While the project was nearing release, the creative team decided to improve the cinematic experience, aiming for a production that meets international standards. Typically, 3D films are shot in that format from the start because converting from 2D can be expensive. However, the film's scale, locations, and production quality have caught the attention of an international distributor. Trivikram Sapalya, producer of Trivikram Cinemas and Success Films, confirmed that the film will be released in both 2D and 3D.

In a first for Kannada cinema since Dr Rajkumar, actor Shruti performs a challenging underwater sequence for the film's climax. The scenes were filmed over several days at Vismaya Studios in Thiruvananthapuram, which is owned by Malayalam superstar Mohanlal. According to the makers, cinematographer Manoj Pillai has used four cameras to capture the sequence.

Shruti reportedly spent around 15 days preparing and executing stunts from a 30-foot height into water while harnessed. She performed a 22-second underwater shot without external oxygen supply. Safety measures included scuba divers, ambulances, and medical staff on standby, ensuring that the high-risk sequences were managed carefully. Executive producer Vidyadhar Shetty noted that these additions raised the

A still from the film

CE FEATURES

THE makers of *Premi* recently confirmed that the film is all set to hit theatres on April 3. According to the makers, the film, which is set in the 1990s, focuses on emotional storytelling while contrasting past and present relationships. "*Premi* is a film that captures a kind of love we don't often think about today. It highlights the emotional depth of relationships from the 90s, compared to modern views on love. The goal was not just to tell a story but to evoke a feeling," says director and composer Pradeep Varma. He adds, "I started as a music director, but as the story unfolded, it needed more involvement, so I also took on the role of director. The story, written by Akkamahadevi, has a personal touch, and I aimed to reflect that in a screenplay that connects emotionally. With my team's support, the film has come together in a way that honors its essence."

Premi to release in April

A still from the film

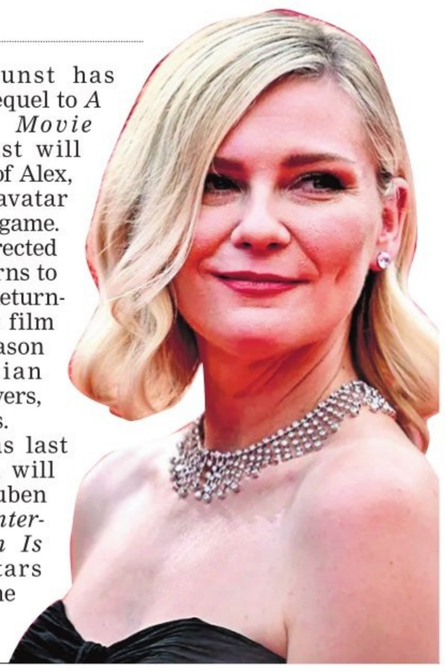
For lead actor Advik, *Premi* is an important career path. "I have acted in a few films before, but this is my first leading role, and I approached it with a sense of responsibility. I worked to understand the emotional layers of my character. It is a simple love story that comes from the heart," he says. "There is a personal connection to this film. My mother wrote the story, and my father produced it. That makes it even more meaningful. The direction effectively highlights the sensitivity in the narrative. Every department has played a part in creating what it is," he notes.

The film, made under the banner of Sri Guru Karibasaveshwara Production, is produced by Siddalingaiah B. With cinematography by Gautham Matti and editing by Sanjeev Reddy, *Premi* also stars Saathvika S, Pradeep Varma, Shobitha, and others in key roles. Producer Siddalingaiah expresses a similar view. "This is new territory for me in cinema, but this film is rooted in belief and support. It is a step taken with trust in the story and the team behind it," he says. "*Premi* is not meant to be loud. It remains true to its emotions, its time, and its characters. We hope audiences experience it the way it should be seen in theatres," he concludes.

Kirsten Dunst joins *Minecraft* Movie sequel

CE FEATURES

KIRSTEN Dunst has joined the sequel to *A Minecraft Movie* (2025). Dunst will play the role of Alex, a playable avatar from the *Minecraft* game. Jared Hess who directed the 2025 film, returns to direct the sequel. Returning from the first film are Jack Black, Jason Momoa, Sebastian Hansen, Emma Myers, and Daniell Brooks.



Dunst, who was last seen in *Roofman*, will also be seen in Ruben Ostlund's *The Entertainment System Is Down*, which stars Keanu Reeves in the lead.

Assassin's Creed series starts filming

CE FEATURES

PRODUCTION has commenced on Netflix's live-action *Assassin's Creed* series in Rome. Set in the Roman Empire of 64 AD, the series, based on the popular video game of the same name, features an ensemble cast that includes Lola Petticrew, Toby Wallace, Zachary Hart, and Laura Marcus, among others. Roberto Patino serves as the show's executive producer, showrunner, and creator alongside David Wiener.

Netflix describes it as "a high-octane thriller," which explores a less-known war between one faction hellbent on determining the future of mankind through manipulative ways and another that fights to protect free will. According to the official logline, the *Assassin's Creed* series "follows its characters across pivotal historical events as they battle to shape humanity's destiny."

Netflix's other video game adaptations include *Splinter Cell: Deathwatch*, *Castlevania*, and *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*.

Mohanlal to star in Priyadarshan's landmark 100th film

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ON Saturday, director Priyadarshan confirmed that his 100th film as a director will star Mohanlal. Antony Perumbavoor of Aashirvad Cinemas, a longtime collaborator of Mohanlal, will produce the film, with Binu George Alexander serving as a co-producer. Notably, Mohanlal also starred in Priyadarshan's directorial debut, 1984's *Poochakkoru Mookkuthi*. About the project, Mohanlal wrote on social media, "Some milestones do not belong to one person alone. They belong to everyone who stood close enough to witness the journey. My dearest Priyan is stepping into his 100th film, and I find myself without words for what that truly means to me. A hundred films is not just a number. It is a lifetime of stories told with passion, countless mornings driven by belief in the magic of cinema, and a journey of unwavering dedication that I have had the privilege of witnessing up close."

The yet-untitled project brings back Priyadarshan and Mohanlal after 2021's *Marakkar: Arabikadalinte Simham*.